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Much of the charm of personality that has made Sir Percy Harris so popular a figure among men and women of all political parties is to be found in these lively and entertaining reminiscences which form a political document of absorbing interest to many more readers than are included within the Liberal communion.

A distinguished parliamentarian, who was for twenty-five years in the House of Commons, and a member of the London County Council for more than twenty-eight years, Sir Percy has something interesting to say concerning practically all the more important statesmen and politicians of the last forty years. He has known fairly intimately a succession of Prime Ministers—Asquith, Lloyd George, Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald, Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill—and has amusing anecdotes and reminiscences to relate concerning statesmen of all parties.

But his activities were by no means limited to the Debating Chamber. He has travelled widely—three times round the world—lived for a time in New Zealand, and, during the first World War, was responsible for the administration of the Volunteer Force. During the 1939-45 War he combined the position of Chief Whip and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, a dual role which presented him with exceptional opportunities for his brilliant powers of observation, the results of which are to be found in these interesting and amusing pages. Although defeated at the General Election, he managed in March, 1946, to stage a come-back by winning the same seat as Member for the L.C.C., a victory that surprised his opponents and gave special pleasure to his friends.

· FORTY YEARS IN AND
OUT OF PARLIAMENT



[Pictorial Press

The Rt. Hon. Sir Percy Harris, Bart., D.L., L.C.C., in his private room off the House of Commons lobby, since pulled down as part of the rebuilding scheme

FORTY YEARS IN AND OUT OF PARLIAMENT

By

Rt. Hon. Sir PERCY HARRIS, Bt.

Forty years on, growing older and older; * *
Shorter in wind, as in memory long,
Feeble of foot and rheumatic of shoulder,
What will it help you that once you were strong?
God give us bases to guard or beleaguer,
Games to play out, whether earnest or fun ;
Fights for the fearless, and goals for the eager,
Twenty, and thirty, and forty years on !

Harrow Song—E. E. BOWEN



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INTRODUCTION

A man who writes an autobiography is under the grave suspicion of having a considerable conceit of himself. But after having been twenty-five years in Parliament and forty years in active political life I found myself suddenly with a lot of idle time on my hands and with a real danger of boredom.

After my defeat in the General Election of 1945 I was staying at a delightful Suffolk farm-house licking my wounds and ruminating about the events that led up to it. I had come ostensibly to help a friend with his harvest, but I regret to say my help was negligible and I certainly did not earn my keep. I had all sorts of visions of new activities to fill up the remaining years of my life. Any active man has moments when he yearns for a complete change and I was no exception. But as it often happens in August there were considerable spells of wet weather, only occasionally broken by sunshine. I had brought down with me a number of books but I soon exhausted them. I am not one that can sit long with my hands folded in front of me. In the sitting-room of the farm-house there happened to be on the desk some sheets of foolscap, just calling out to be used. And so one dismal morning when the rain was beating against the window pane, I took possession of that paper and commenced to jot down reminiscences. Once I started there was no stopping me. Memories came rushing back and this book, such as it is, was written at post haste. Of course it has been checked and rewritten in many parts, but the last forty years rolled past me like a kaleidoscope and I saw them as a complete whole.

CHAPTER I

YEARS OF PREPARATION

I OFTEN wonder why so many people desire to enter public life. In many ways it is a mug's game. The rewards are few and the disappointments many. The electors are notoriously fickle. During recent years I had to do with the placing of men and women as Parliamentary candidates. The motives that inspired them, of course, are mixed but generally honourable. Their qualifications, however, for public life vary enormously. When men or women decide to enter a trade or profession they have generally prepared for it and have some particular aptitude. But that is considered quite unnecessary when anyone contemplates entering the political field.

Political associations are often equally casual in selecting a candidate for Parliamentary honours and the electors are even less particular as to whom they vote for. Sometimes, I fear, they think anyone will do, provided he has the right political label.

But whatever faults I have, and I am conscious of having many, I can claim from my earliest days I did prepare myself for the Parliamentary game. I have a vivid recollection as a small child lying on the floor and reading *The Times* and even the Debates which were then reported in full. I sound an appalling prig, but I must have got something out of that far from childish occupation. Perhaps I was fortunate in my schooling. After various vicissitudes I went to a preparatory school in Notting Hill Gate. The building has long since been converted into a block of flats. It was a private venture school kept by a Scotsman, James Hardie, whose son, Martin, was a contemporary of mine and a personal friend. Martin Hardie was to become keeper of the prints at the South Kensington Museum and to win considerable distinction as a water-colour painter. But it was a young assistant master, John Henderson, that exercised most influence on me. He was both an historian and politician and started in me an intelligent interest in history which has remained with me ever since. Many years after, I ran across Henderson first as assistant editor of the Liberal Publication Department and later as Secretary of the National Liberal Club, where he was universally popular. But he was no dry-as-dust politician. He was intensely interested in general literature and poetry and for many years he was Secretary of the Omar Khayyam Club, through which he had intimate personal contacts with many writers and artists.

In 1890 at the age of 14 I went from Hardie's to the famous school on Harrow Hill.

1890 to 1894 were years of excellent vintage at Harrow. Welldon, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta and Dean of Durham, was Headmaster, and amongst the boys were Winston Churchill and Amery. Neither of those names meant much to us boys, but our hero was Archie MacLaren, one of the greatest cricketers of all time. I have however a vivid memory of Winston, who was a year or two older than I, but who was perpetually stuck in the lower form of the school. Many years afterwards, at a dinner at the House of Commons presided over by Stanley Baldwin, Winston made a characteristic speech about his Harrow days. Baldwin had said that he had left no special mark and insisted that he had not distinguished himself at Harrow. "What," said Winston, "Baldwin did not tell you was that he was in the upper sixth and was second or third in the school. I did distinguish myself: I was longer bottom of the lower fourth than any boy in the history of the school." But I do commend Winston Churchill's own account of his Harrow days in one of his very best books, *Early Days*.

Amery, on the contrary, won distinction from his earliest days. He was head of the school and a distinguished one at that. He has very little changed through the process of time. Unlike most of us, his hair has not gone grey, and he is the same stocky little figure that graced the platform on speech days and said his words in the same way as he did as Secretary of State for India, standing at the Box in the House of Commons.

Churchill in bulk and bearing has very much more altered in appearance, but he has still the same personality I became familiar with as a small boy. He was very fond of attaching himself to some junior master, and he could often be seen walking along the High Street with one, speaking in that familiar raucous voice, no doubt about the exploits of his father. Except a boy was exceptionally tall, boys, until they reached the lower fifth, had to wear Etons, and as far as I can recollect, Winston wore them and had the appearance of an overgrown schoolboy bulging out of his Eton jacket. Often when I have sat opposite to him as Prime Minister and seen him indulge in those characteristic displays of temper and petulance, I have felt he had little changed and was still the overgrown schoolboy of his Harrow days. In many of his moods he has a very boyish face, and I have always felt he has never completely grown up. That is one of his charms. There always remains in him something of the schoolboy. He loves to go abroad wearing all kinds of uniforms. His spirit of adventure has something of the schoolboy touch which is most lovable and charming. Life with him is a great adventure full of fun and excitement. He has never

spared himself or bothered about appearances. One day he is wearing the uniform of a colonel of the Hussars and the next a siren suit with equal pleasure and confidence. He would be a great man to go tiger-shooting with but not equally safe to go on a dull journey—I am sure he would lead one into mischief. All his life has been one great adventure. He has never spared himself or avoided any risk. Most men who at the height of their careers had suffered twice from bad attacks of pneumonia would go slow. But not Winston Churchill. Hardly had he recovered from a severe illness, than off again he would go on some long journey with cigar in his mouth and a double whisky to fortify him. But to go back to his school-days. Certainly he did not distinguish himself at Harrow. He attributes much of his literary aptitude to the excellent training in the English language given him by the attractive person in whose form he was stuck for a long time due to his backwardness in Latin. This master, Somervell by name, was father of Winston's Attorney-General who became Home Secretary in the Carceter Government and lost his seat as member for Crewe at the last General Election.

There is no doubt that Harrow in my time had a fine lot of masters, most of them with a Liberal outlook. Bosworth Smith, Colbeck, Townsend Warner, Sankey, and above all the one and only E. E. Bowen who left indelibly his mark on the school and all it stood for. Most of the famous Harrow songs were written by him and he invented a special method of call-over or "Bill" for the summer-time, which reduced to the minimum the time spent on roll-call.

He was a remarkable man and one could not be in his form without his impressing his personality on one. I had made up my mind in my very early school-days that I could not memorise poetry, and not only had I persuaded myself but I managed to convince one after another of my form masters who accepted me on my own valuation. But I could not pull it off with Bowen. When I failed to recite the verses set by him to his class, and I produced with real conviction the statement that I could not learn things by heart, I carried no conviction and was met by the stern reply that it was about time I learned to memorise. And I had to turn up every morning at his house until I had memorised the verses. But he was much more than a stern disciplinarian. He understood boys and knew how to get the best out of them.

But I mention these Harrow masters because so many of them were men of character and helped to stimulate in me interest in history and political institutions. I cannot say I played any special part in the life of the school. I never got beyond the fifth form and I was not much good at games, particularly bad at

cricket though a keen but not skilful player of football. I spent much too much time watching others play cricket, and I acquired a taste for the game as an observer and reader of cricket scores in the paper that has never quite deserted me. One incident is perhaps here worth relating. One boy had particular antipathy to me and subjected me to all sorts of petty persecutions as will happen with small boys. In the holidays, I had taken lessons in boxing and had learnt to use my fists. Harrow boys wear a peculiar flat straw hat fastened to the head by elastic on the back. Going down the steps from the bill yard opposite the old school, I met my arch-enemy who, in insulting manner, flicked off my hat. It happened to be opposite the historic "milling-yard" which in the old days had been used for school fights but had long since fallen out of use, I think by some school regulation. However, instead of submitting meekly to the insult I lunged out at him and landed him squarely in the face much to his surprise at my not living up to my reputation as one of the meek and lowly. There were a number of boys about at the time and it was too good an opportunity for them to miss. Before we knew where we were we were pushed on to the milling-ground and had a proper set-to. I received a black eye in the process but I gave a very good account of myself and never again suffered the petty persecutions that I am afraid only too often gentle boys are subject to. It was a useful lesson I learnt then, which I have found helpful all through my political life. I never have indulged in personalities and have always followed the courtesies of political controversies, but if anyone has tried to knock my hat off I immediately hit back and hit hard, and I have found that a very useful safeguard in the rough and tumble of political life.

As I reached the end of my school years some decision had to be come to as to my future. My father had founded a very fine business in New Zealand with a London office. Already my elder brother had gone over there but my father was getting on in years and wanted my help. But he had a very good personal friend, the Rt. Hon. Eugene Wason, M.P. for Clackmannan, who for some reason or other had taken an interest in me and endeavoured to persuade my father to send me to Cambridge. I immediately responded to the idea and it was arranged accordingly. Wason was in many ways a remarkable man and belonged to a type almost extinct. Incidentally, he and his brother Cathcart, also in the House of Commons, were both giants, though the former was thick-set and heavy while the latter was thin and willowy. Both wore beards, were good-looking and had striking personalities. As far as I can recollect Eugene was six feet four inches in height, and the story goes that if he stepped on a weighing machine the hands

went round until they would go no farther as he topped the twenty stone marked on the dial. Eugene Wason was a scholar and a gentleman, was fond of good wine and food and had no patience for anyone who did not hazard a guess as to the vintage or date of a particular port he offered you at his table. Those were the days when you did have a good joint on the table, and he would like to ask a shy young visitor like myself whether he preferred his cut off the knuckle or near the knuckle, and if out of courtesy you replied that you did not mind which, he cursed you for not having a mind of your own. He was very keen on Bobbie Burns and would recite him by the mile in a rich Scottish brogue which was very pleasing to the ear.

In those days Greek was compulsory for the "Little Go," the equivalent to the Matric, and I had to acquire enough to satisfy the University Examiners. There was a choice of books, and I selected a volume of Xenophon and the Gospel According to St. Luke, in Greek. What I did not know about those two volumes was not worth knowing, but any other Greek was quite beyond my ken. I had, too, to learn some Greek grammar and I was so skilfully coached that I passed my Greek papers with flying colours, though any Greek I did learn at the time has long since passed out of my knowledge. This experience has given me a healthy contempt for examinations as a real test of ability to benefit by a University career. For some reason or other Trinity Hall was selected for my college. I cannot remember any special reason and I had no association with it.

In 1894 "The Hall," as it was familiarly called to distinguish it from Trinity College, was regarded as a blood college, very sporting, with a healthy contempt for learning. Beck was the senior tutor and he was not able to pronounce his R's. The story goes that when a man applied to enter the college he would ask him if he "wood or wed," *i.e.*, if he rowed or read. If he expressed an intention to row the examination test was light, but if on the other hand he showed an inclination to read, the papers were examined critically.

Beck was a shy man and I think he was terrified at his hearty undergraduates. It was always rather an ordeal for him to have them to a meal. He had one stock joke. When you came to a second course he would suggest that a second plate was unnecessary and that all you had to do was to turn it up the other way. Dr. Latham, the Master, was a man of very different type. A distinguished-looking man with a grand manner, he used to ask the undergraduates about once a year to take port with him, and apart from that made very little contact with them.

The Hall was a rowdy college. It had been head of the river

for some time, and most of the men were big full-blooded noisy individuals, full of surplus energy that they often let off by breaking windows, a rather senseless sport that seemed to give them special satisfaction. It was not easy to read in such an atmosphere. Everyone was expected to row. I did make an attempt at it but never got much beyond a crock eight. I was not heavy or beefy enough to justify special coaching. I decided to take the history tripos, which, in those days, covered a broad area of subjects, and did provide a good general education. General and Constitutional History, a Special Subject (I took the War of Spanish Succession), Theory of Law and Government, Political Science, Constitutional Law, International Law, Economic History and Political Economy—not a bad training for a political life. Thornley was the history tutor at "The Hall" in those days and he specialised on Theory of Law and Government. He was an intelligent and kind person, but he did not take very active interest in the men put under his charge. A favourite theme with him was to compare the attitude of mind of the average Frenchman to politics with that of the average Englishman, a comparison which would not have much ground in these days. "The Frenchman," he would say, "when he gets up in the morning looks into the glass and sees a thousandth part of a tyrant and feels great satisfaction, forgetting he sees the whole of a slave. The Englishman looks into his glass, sees no part of a tyrant but sees the whole of a free man." He was never tired of repeating this statement which gave him great satisfaction as a warning against needless interference by the State with personal liberties. Like so many undergraduates, for the first year I largely marked time enjoying the new freedom of being my own master and my reading was desultory. At the end of it I realised I was a long way behind the schedule for the History Tripos. I therefore joined up with a reading party under W. F. Reddaway, only a year or two older than myself, and with him I went to Brittany. This was my first visit to the Continent, and I remember the real thrill arriving by steamer at St. Malo from Southampton. It would not have been anywhere nearly as exciting if my first contact with France had been, say, Calais or Dieppe which are just ordinary towns, but St. Malo is an old fortified city with its walls rising steeply out of the sea which off this coast is liquid blue.

The Bretons, in those days, wore brilliant colours, and the women kept their old costumes. It was quite like coming into a new world after the drab grey of our own seaports. That was nearly half a century ago: Brittany has become much more sophisticated of recent years. Before the Great War it had become overrun with tourists and must have lost some at least of its charm. But the Bretons do stick to their old customs and costumes and there

are many parts left untouched by the drabness of twentieth-century clothes.

Amongst the places I stayed at was Cancale, the centre of the oyster fisheries. There the Cançalaise clung tenaciously to the picturesque lace caps, the sabots and their own dialect. The men went off at certain times to the Newfoundland fisheries, but at the oyster season the whole population worked at the famous oyster beds. They had great contempt for French tourists who, they would say with scorn, speak in that ugly Paris accent! Their knowledge of the outside world in those days was primitive in the extreme. We came from London? "Was it a big place, as large as St. Malo?" When we assured them of its vast size they were incredulous. I am sorely tempted to visit it again but I am afraid I should be disillusioned and find a much better informed and much less attractive people than enlightened my youth. But St. Michel I believe has little changed. I did visit it once again a few years ago and found all the landmarks intact but very much more self-conscious than at the end of the nineteenth century before the age of motor-cars. Madame Poulard Année is still *renommée pour l'omelette*, but when I first went there it was an ordinary auberge and it had not become commercialised. I do think St. Michel is one of the beauty spots of the world, but to appreciate it you want to stay there a day or two and see the sun set from the Abbey buildings rising almost sheer out of the rocks with tints blending them all into a picturesque whole. The rock is connected with the mainland only by a narrow causeway, now I believe much overrun by motor-cars. At low tide the island rises over attractive-looking sands which are treacherous in the extreme. Woe betide anyone who walks out on them any distance. The tide comes in at a tremendous pace and the quicksands make it impossible to race it. At low tide you get beautiful reflections on the sand, but when the sea reaches the shore and surrounds the rock, you get an equally attractive but very different effect. But if you are to enjoy all the charms of St. Michel—"Go view it by the pale moonlight."

But I am in danger of drifting into a guide-book, which is quite beyond the inspiration of this book. I must not, however, close this digression without a reference to another town where we spent a long vacation in Brittany. St. Pol de Leon which is almost out at Finisterre is a small market town on the north-west coast with a plethora of churches any one of which would be an attraction to any part of England. We stayed at the Hôtel de France where, for the modest price of five francs a day, we had three good meals a day and the choice of cider or *vin ordinaire*. And the locals told us we were being grossly overcharged. Madame had invented an absurd song which we were all expected to sing of an evening:

"Hôtel de France est bon, bon, bon,
 A St. Pol de Leon est bon, bon, bon:
 La lumière électrique est bonne, bonne, bonne,
 A St. Pol de Leon est bon, bon, bon."

and so on in interminable verses to cover all the charms of the hotel. Of course the charges were absurdly low according to modern ideas. But there were no baths, and no drainage, and we did most of our washing in the sea. There were lovely firm sands on that coast and our little reading party used to play cricket under the leadership of Reddaway. We discovered we had created considerable hostility amongst the natives, and they vented it by putting down glass to cut our bare feet when we indulged in our strange game.

I did not take much part in the Cambridge Union debates, but on one of the rare occasions I did speak, I was followed by no less a person than the great "O.B.," the legend of whose personality still survives. Oscar Browning had the appearance of a nice fat jovial monk and shared many characteristics in common. He was a fellow of King's, to which he migrated from Eton where he had been a master. He kept more or less open house and encouraged undergraduates of all shades of opinion to congregate in his rooms, and allowed them to say what they liked and discuss any problem with freedom. The debate in question was on Foreign Policy, and the resolution was in favour of splendid isolation as against the entanglements of alliances. O.B., who favoured understanding with Germany, solemnly said, "The German Emperor is one of the nicest emperors I know," and he meant it. One of his little foibles was to take pride in being intimate with every important person in our own and every other country.

When anyone writes about his life at a university, mention is rarely made of education and I certainly am not going to depart from that practice except to say that though Political Economy was only a small section of the History Tripos, I became intensely interested in it. The two figures who directed economic studies in those days were Professor Marshall and Dr. Cunningham, the former with his *Principles of Political Economy* and the latter with his *Economic History*, both of which have stood the test of time. Marshall was a sound Free Trader and Cunningham at any rate in his latter days became an ardent exponent of Protection and Tariff Reform. Both these books provide very good groundwork for economic theory, and I found that they stood me in good stead in after years when I was up against the rough and tumble of political life. Meanwhile, I had more or less made up my mind to go to the Bar, and at the instigation again of my friend Eugene Wason, I was entered as a student of the Honourable Society of the Middle

Temple. One of the many things that amazes the intelligent foreigner is that one of the first things a young man with legal ambitions has to do is to go through a course of dinners. It is not that the British are authorities on the culinary art. On the contrary, there is no European that has less discrimination in the choice of food. Of course, the explanation is simple. A man before he can qualify to be called to the Bar has to keep term, that is serve an apprenticeship of study, and it is assumed he does so by being in and out of the Law Courts from which he can imbibe legal tradition and atmosphere.

Certainly the personal contact with other students round the table has its advantages and accounts for the *esprit de corps* and peculiar good will that characterises the British Law Courts. In those days we dined in messes of four and each mess was entitled to as much beer as the members wanted and either one bottle of port or two other wines. There were many coloured students whose religion forbade them to take advantage of their rights, and there was a certain type of man who always tried to worm his way into their company, not out of special affection for them, but to be able to consume the whole of their wine ration. Those were the days of plenty. Each mess of four had a separate joint of mutton and its own fruit tart. The Inns of Court have a great fascination and it is sad to think of the amount of damage done by the blitz to these buildings tucked away behind Fleet Street, quite oblivious of the noise and strife of City life. The Middle Temple Hall has survived, and no more perfect example can be found of fifteenth-century architecture. Fate has diverted me away from the law. I was duly called to the Bar but I never practised. But I am sure my time was not wasted. Knowledge of law is an immense help both in politics and business and I have avoided many a pitfall by just that something which provided me a direction post that kept me on the right lines.

Before I close this chapter, I feel I ought to refer to one incident that I think influenced the ultimate course of my life. The end of the nineteenth century saw a great development in the idea of Social Settlements. I think it is safe to say at the end of the nineteenth century they were at the height of their influence. They have persisted right on to the present day and they still do useful work, but the real need for them is not so great as it was. Public authorities do more for the people by way of Evening Institutes and Adult Education; besides there is not the same desire of poor neighbourhoods to seek outside help. But these were the days before the motor-bus and it was true to say half the people did not know how the other half lived. It was more of a journey to get from the West to the East of London, and thousands who had spent most of their

lives in the metropolis had never seen Bermondsey or Whitechapel. Nowadays motorists, in spite of circular roads and by-passes, do go through every part of the town. Cambridge House was one of the latter settlements and the Head, the Rev. Faulkner Bailey, visited my university to paint the picture and get recruits for work in South London. I lent a willing ear to his call and undertook to join up and lend a hand. I will tell more of my experiences in another chapter, but I owe much of my knowledge of social conditions to what I learned round about the Elephant and Castle.

CHAPTER II

NEW ZEALAND

FOR a hundred years my family has been directly connected with New Zealand. That is a long time in the history of that country. My grandfather, on my mother's side, went out to Auckland in the eighteen-forties with one of the first shiploads of settlers and opened up business as a general dealer. The firm is still functioning and is being carried on by a fourth generation. His great-great-grandsons went overseas with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and the eldest, who lost a leg in North Africa, is now head of the concern. My father, who was born in Cracow, was there in the 1848 Revolution when there was fighting in the streets, found the place too hot for him, and made for Australia. How he got there and what he did in his early days I could never find out from him. All I do know is that when gold was discovered in Otago, New Zealand, and there was a rush there in the eighteen-fifties, he went over there to seek his fortune. Money was easily made and quickly spent. There was a shortage of goods and any man with an adventurous spirit who was more or less steady could do well. Dunedin, the provincial capital, prospered, but like many mining towns most men gambled and drank, and it was the few who did not that prospered. Anyhow, my father did well enough to go back to Australia and charter a shipload of goods, but on his way back was shipwrecked and lost his all and had to start again. He then went into partnership with a man of means, called Bing, who in due course went over to the old country on a buying mission, but instead of attending to his job amused himself and sent out a lot of useless junk. On his return my father found him impossible to work with, and when he complained met with the reply that if he did not like his partner's methods he could either clear out or buy him out. Unfortunately my father had no capital, but in those

days bankers were not the hard taskmasters they are to-day, and were prepared to give credit on personal reputation. Harris had the reputation for hard work and enterprise and on that alone got the necessary capital to buy out Bing and carry on the business. That explains the mystery of Bing Harris; the first name in the company, now a household word in New Zealand, did exist, but he went out of it in the early days. Many of the successful traders of the nineteenth century were made possible because bankers were ready to give credit to young men of enterprise, on their character, and without security. It is a very different story these days, and the big joint stock banks, with boards sitting in London, don't know the personalities of their smaller clients and will not risk their shareholders' money on the character of individuals. Business in a new country, is not all smooth running. Much depends on the price of primary products that vary with world conditions. In a young country, and a small one at that, there is a tendency towards over-buying and for the market to get over-stocked. When I left Cambridge the family business was going through a lean time, and my father, who many years before had opened a London office to supervise the buying side, found the need to go overseas and asked me at twenty-one, with little or no experience, to come and take charge until his return. The office was in Hamsel Street, not far from the G.P.O. It was a dismal, narrow street, and the office itself was equally unattractive. I knew very little about the business, but I took a great dislike to the place and made up my mind to clear out directly he returned. In fact I told him jokingly when he left that he must not be surprised if I burnt the place down. And the strange thing happened. In less than a week the office was burnt down and wiped off the map. Needless to say I had had no hand in it. The fire broke out in a mantle factory on the opposite side of the street, and destroyed the whole area in what came to be known as the great Cripplegate fire. I went out to lunch and when I returned not only was there no sign of our own building but I could not even get near the street. Incidentally, I did not know the addresses of the staff, and had to advertise in the Press for them to make contact with me. Somehow or other I did get in touch with them, found a new office and opened up again to make a new start. It was certainly an interesting experience as it brought me very quickly up against the realities of life. I learned more about business in that short week that I could otherwise have acquired in several years. There were all the usual troubles of landlord and tenant, the problem of insurance and making fresh contracts. The business world is not an easy one and, young and innocent as I was, I found I had to keep my eyes skinned if the interests of the company were to be safeguarded.

My father had an appalling house in Queen's Gate. If ever there was an invention of the devil, it was those high houses in South Kensington. This one had six floors and a basement, and in those days no lift. A telephone had not yet been installed, and the only way of internal communication between top and bottom was a system of speaking-tubes that usually did not function. These houses required the maximum of servants and yielded the minimum of comfort. Everything was sacrificed to the entertainment side. An enormous double drawing-room made it possible to give a dance for a hundred people without discomfort and undue overcrowding. The basement was a terrific affair with a large kitchen, servant hall, pantry, to say nothing of rooms for a butler and footman. It was a relic of a barbarous age. Everything was sacrificed to outside display and there was very little comfort in our sense of the word. My father had a taste for pictures and had many friends among the artists, especially the Academicians. Each year he would give an Academy dinner, when the President of that institution generally came. It was a very formal affair and speeches were made and "Art shop" was talked. Very unkind things have been said about Victorian Academicians and there has been a great slump in the value of their pictures, but I must say they were good company and they did know their trade. Anyhow, they did give my father a wider outlook than his business. His walls provided room for a veritable picture gallery, and he took pleasure in encouraging some of the younger artists by buying their pictures. His great friend was Sir David Murray, R.A., who was a prolific painter and turned out pictures by the dozen. He was a Scotsman and was good company in his own special way, claiming to know something about everything. He nearly always came to dinner on Sunday nights and treated our house more or less as his second home. For many years he was Chairman of the Arts Club in which he played a big part and of which my father was a member.

This is a digression, but I mention this house to give the background in which I was brought up. I hated the house, which I regarded as a mausoleum: it stood for a different age and way of living that was rapidly drawing to a close.

My one ambition was to get out of both the business and Queen's Gate. I determined to pass my Bar examination, without delay. I discovered a remarkable coach, a Mr. Kingdon. When I first interviewed him he asked me the pertinent question whether I wanted to learn law or pass my examination. If I wanted the latter he would undertake to get me through in six months and not to accept a fee until I had passed. He insisted that the real time to master the intricacies of law was when I had the exam behind me. I accepted the contract, though rather doubtfully, as I felt the dice

were too heavily loaded against him as I could only give a few hours to reading owing to having the London office on my shoulders. However, in due course I sat for my examination to schedule, and to my amazement I passed. I had proved a good "spec" to Mr. Kingdon as I had passed my examination at the first attempt. I was certainly helped by occasional visits to the Law Courts, especially those presided over by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Russell, and Mr. Justice Hawkins who was one of the great characters of his day and had a way of calling a spade a spade and not allowing counsel to talk round a case. Russell, too, was an illuminating person to listen to. He was one of the greatest advocates of all time, and when he was on the Bench he often could not resist cutting in and doing a little cross-examination of his own. But the City and the law by no means absorbed all my energies. Very soon after I left Cambridge, I made contact with Cambridge House, Camberwell, and renewed my acquaintance with its head. I found there was a school near the Elephant and Castle which had no provision for its old boys and badly wanted some help. On my own I took a couple of rooms in the Camberwell Road and opened a boys' club. They were a rough but cheery crowd. I provided them with a billiards table and other amenities and as long as I was there they were more or less well behaved. Once my back was turned pandemonium prevailed. I did finally get a friend to assist me and so to give me an occasional evening off. It was the time of Kitchener's Egyptian campaign. There was only a thin partition between the club's two rooms. One evening when I was absent the boys decided to repeat the Battle of Omdurman by regarding the partition as the dervishes and charging into it with the billiards cues until it was more or less destroyed. I was not only mulcted in damages but, not unnaturally, given notice to quit by the landlord, and had to find premises elsewhere. Hardly any of my boys had ever been in the country. Rural life to them was something as much apart as a foreign land. Those were the days not only before the motor-bus, but before the electric tram, and travel was difficult and expensive. Besides, wages were low, and the lads had very little spare cash in their pockets. One of my most amusing experiences was taking the club to the country by train. Most of them had never seen a cow and they had only a vague idea how milk was obtained.

Alas, when I went overseas, the man to whom I handed over the club failed to keep it together, and on my return the boys had scattered and I lost contact with them.

One other activity I must mention here. These were the early days of the Workers' Education Association and I accepted an invitation to lecture for them. I used to travel down to remote places in the suburbs in damp and ill-lit railway carriages. The lecturing was

all right but the travelling was all wrong. Perhaps I was burning the candle at both ends. I succumbed to a bad attack of jaundice which the doctor described as the nearest thing to malaria he had ever seen in England. Meanwhile, my father had returned to London and I felt that now was the opportunity to relinquish my City job. But fate was against me. He had gone out to New Zealand to appoint a new manager, but the man he appointed was burned to death when the Royal Oak Hotel in Wellington, where he was living, was burnt to the ground. My father felt he could not undertake the journey again, and begged me to go out and help my brother to get things straight. I felt I could not refuse. Besides, I felt some curiosity to see the land of my family fortunes. In these days of aeroplanes you can get to New Zealand in a few days, and now the war is over passenger planes built on a large scale may run out to the Dominions as easily as we used to travel to the South of France. But forty-five years ago it was regarded as something of a pilgrimage to go to the Antipodes. Six weeks was about the shortest time in which you could make the journey, though if you were lucky, and could make the connections, it could be done in a shorter time. But the old route via Marseilles, Suez, Colombo, across the Indian Ocean to Australia and then via Tasmania, the Bluff to Dunedin was interesting and provided something of an adventure with constantly changing climate and scene. I would always recommend a young man who has an opportunity to travel to get a glimpse of the East. Anyone who only knows Europe, and Western Europe in particular, gets a wrong impression of mankind as a whole. The Arab and the Indian have such a different way of life that those who only know the European do get world problems out of focus. I visited New Zealand three times and always journeyed to it via Suez Canal and Ceylon, and returned via North America. Could you have two greater contrasts?

New Zealand itself is difficult to see in perspective. They have so much in common with the Motherland, revere the same traditions and in many ways are aggressively British. They keep the King's Birthday with greater ardour than we do at home.

Dunedin, where I first took up my residence, is definitely Scottish. The settlement, originally organised by Scottish elders, endowed the Presbyterian Church by settling on it a considerable part of the city lands. When a Scotsman dies he is usually followed to the grave with bagpipes and with genuine Scottish respect for the dead.

The inhabitants are frugal and industrious. They have endowed a magnificent hospital which is world-famous and vies in teaching with Edinburgh University. In situation, Dunedin is in many ways not unlike Edinburgh. Surrounded by purple hills and situated

on a lough and only a mile or two from the sea, it is an attractive town with a climate as austere as its namesake.

If ever there was a democratic people it is the New Zealanders. They are quite unconscious of class distinctions and of recent years this has, if possible, become more marked because graduated taxation has cleared away any great difference of wealth. There are no rich men in the American sense and no poor by European standards. But it is just as well to remember that it is still much undeveloped, and though it has an area not much less than Great Britain, it provides a home for well under two millions. It has one advantage over Australia in that it has no one big centre like Melbourne or Sydney. There are four big towns, Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin and Christchurch, and though the second is the capital it has neither in size nor in commercial importance any superiority to the other three. The Maoris, the native population, are a remarkable people who claim, with pride, that they have never been conquered. After putting up a magnificent fight against a regular British army which was sent out on a punitive expedition, an agreement was signed which, curiously enough, was honoured by both sides. The White Man's right to live in their country was accepted, but great tracts of land were reserved for the Maoris and cannot be parted with to the Europeans. My mother was born in Auckland and lived through the Maori War, and I have her album which tells of many of the men who took part in the struggle.

As is usual, the natives tended to decline in contact with European civilisation, and lost some of their own virtues and acquired some British bad habits. But by the teaching of hygiene and in other ways I understand this decline has been arrested. But what is most impressive is that British and Maori meet on terms of complete equality and there is no race consciousness. The Maori is a magnificent footballer and an all-round sport, while many of them do well at the Universities. They have their own representatives in Parliament and they generally have a member in the Government of the day. With consummate tact they somehow arrange matters that they have members on both sides of the House. But it must not be thought they have been simply absorbed into the New Zealand population. On the contrary, they cling tenaciously to their old customs and traditions in their own native reserves. Something has been heard in the German war of the horror of the enemy when a Maori battalion charged with their war cry. The Haka, or war dance, is a terrifying and impressive ceremony, and can still be seen and heard at Rotorua by fortunate tourists. When I was first in New Zealand, the one and only Dick Seddon was Prime Minister and he reigned supreme for a considerable time. He was

a rough and ready politician with little or no knowledge of economic theory, and when in London on more than one occasion he put his foot in it badly and caused considerable amusement among our highbrow politicians. But he had a great hold on his own people and he had a lot of horse sense which enabled him to steer his country through many difficulties. He had a very astute and able lieutenant in Joseph Ward, afterwards to succeed him. Ward had more knowledge of politics and finance, but I doubt if he ever had the hold on his people that Seddon had, or was really a better man.

People are apt to judge Dominion statesmen by British standards, but while we here can select our leaders from over forty millions of people, and even then don't always succeed too well, New Zealand, even to-day, has less than two millions to choose from.

When the mother country has been in difficulty, New Zealand's political leaders, whatever party they belonged to, have always come to her aid and have done so with skill and judgment. New Zealand has well been described as the British Commonwealth's laboratory for social experiment. She was the pioneer in Old Age Pensions, has a good land system, which would repay studying, and has done excellent work in co-operative farming, as her butter and cheese exports bear eloquent testimony. Of course she has made mistakes, and sometimes has had to pay dearly for them. It has generally taken the form of over-borrowing, followed by inflation, which has reacted on her credit abroad. But that is natural in a young country with great resources but, unlike South American States, she has been prepared to take advice and put her house in order when the occasion required it.

Party differences run high, and elections are pretty tough, but like us in Great Britain, New Zealanders, after the fight is over, settle down and conform to our British tradition and don't carry their differences into the smoking-room. One thing is worth mentioning here. They broadcast their debates over a special wave-length, and I am told it is generally regarded as a popular entertainment and well worth listening to.

When I was in New Zealand at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, transport, of course, was very much more primitive than it is to-day. The railway system had not been completed and it was general to go from Wellington to Auckland by steamer or to go as far as New Plymouth and take a small ship, which gave one a terrific tossing about. I don't think I have ever been more uncomfortable at sea than on that particular journey. Of course there were no motor-cars, and roads were generally conspicuous by their absence. I remember a journey I took to Auckland about 1903. I took train to Wanganui, then went by steamer up the Wanganui River (which is by

no means easy to negotiate, having in places a tremendous stream and rapids), and then boarded a coach. These vehicles were primitive indeed and drawn by five horses, i.e., three leaders in front. I never quite understood why they had five instead of the usual four horses, and they did take some driving. We drove straight across the bush and had nothing to guide us but cart tracks. I had many drives of this kind up country. On this occasion one of our fellow-passengers was a carcass of mutton which was just pushed in alongside of us as a travelling companion. We would stay at a wayside inn, where there was always ample food but rarely particularly well cooked. I should think the New Zealander drinks more tea per head of the population than anywhere else in the world. He has it when he gets up in the morning, he takes it at eleven o'clock, has it with his midday meal and again at four o'clock. He has it with his supper and, before he goes to bed, he has a final cup. And it is not weak stuff, but a pretty strong brew. But if you want to have the genuine drink, you have to sample billy tea, which up country is cooked in a saucepan over a wood fire, with sugar and milk added, and allowed to stew all day, to drink as occasion requires. I suppose they still drink it, they actually did in my days, but I cannot honestly say I fancied it. I should say it is nearer poison than the strongest alcoholic drink.

Here I must pause for a moment for a short personal digression. In all memoirs there is a temptation either to over-emphasise personal or family affairs which are of very little interest to the reader, or to ignore them altogether, which gives a false picture of the writer's life. The novel has been the most popular form of literature because it gives scope for what the public is most interested in, and that is personal relations. Documentary films can never vie with stories of love and passion. But I am here going to attempt the happy medium and indulge in some personal reminiscences.

When my father came to London from New Zealand, about 1870, the first family he came into contact with was the Porters, the head of which was one John Porter, a partner in the firm of Foster, Porter & Co., well-known wholesale house in the City. Porter had come of a well-known Cumberland family, and came to London in his early youth to build up the business that still carries on to-day. Porter lived up at Highgate and used to drive to the City every morning in his dogcart. He was the father of a very large family—four sons and four daughters. My father used to go at week-ends and ride over the heath with the daughters, particularly the eldest daughter, Sarah, of whom more anon. The friendship persisted long after my father's marriage and when I was a boy I was friends with all John Porter's grandchildren and

visited their houses and danced and played with them. The youngest of the daughters married John Astley Bloxam, a famous surgeon of his time and a remarkable character in his way. He was for many years Senior Surgeon of Charing Cross Hospital and he was a skilled and daring operator. He practised at Grosvenor Street and had a smart clientele. He had been doctor in his early days in the Horse Guards—"the Blues"—which gave him a connection very useful to him in after days, as well as giving him a military air that never quite left him. But he never cultivated the bedside manner and gave short shrift to other doctors who called him into consultation. As patients know only too well, doctors have a way of always agreeing with each other, and professional etiquette seems to demand that they never differ. But that was not Bloxam's way and he came to be known as "What rot nonsense" and he did not endear himself to the profession as a whole. But his skill was unrivalled. A friend of mine, Williams, told me an amusing story of a visit to his surgery to be treated for a bad knee. "Take your trousers down," Bloxam shouted at him. Williams hesitated. "Don't you hear?" Bloxam continued. "Are you deaf?" The patient meekly complied. "Bend over," said Bloxam, and without any warning, and not even "By your leave," he cut out a large piece of flesh from his backside, and grafted it with consummate skill on to the damaged place. When it was all over Bloxam smilingly explained that if he had asked permission, or warned him, there would have been a fuss and probably an anæsthetic would have been necessary. As it was it was all done in the twinkling of an eye. That was characteristic of the man. He rather liked being rude, particularly to young men, and I did not escape the sharpness of his tongue. When I went to stay at his country house at the invitation of his daughter, he did his best to make me feel I was not wanted. But it was only his way and beneath his rough exterior was a heart of gold, and he would prove himself a loyal and good friend. He hated humbug and never attempted to conceal his hatred of it.

At the time of the Hamsel Street fire, Bloxam's two daughters happened to be staying with my mother, and the youngest, Frieda, helped me to sort the papers rescued from the ruins. A friendship started. We exchanged books and used to go bicycling together, a form of exercise then in its infancy. We also discussed every kind of subject from political economy to the newest form of poetry or play. When I had to go to New Zealand at rather short notice, we both realised that our friendship was something more than platonic. However, for reasons I need not enumerate here, there were objections to our formal engagement, and under pressure it was agreed we should not correspond for a year, to see if our

affections could stand the test of time. I was only twenty-one, so there was much to be said for this arrangement. However, after I had been about a year in New Zealand I received a telegram from Winchester, England, "Come home at once, Frieda ill, Sarah." For the moment I couldn't make out who Sarah was, but when I did not reply, another came, more explicit, this time signed Sarah Richardson. This time I did not hesitate, but packed up my box and found the quickest route to England, and without asking anyone's leave made for home. This telegram was from Porter's eldest daughter who in days gone by had ridden over the heath with my father. She had married a man called Richardson, who was first master at Winchester College and was in charge of the scholars. She was a remarkable woman and exercised great influence over the various generations of boys that went through the school. My father had given her as a wedding present a silver tea kettle, which she used at the tea-parties she gave every Sunday to the boys, and she was accustomed to speak of it as "Harris's Kettle." It was true that Frieda Bloxam hadn't been well but the real truth was that she had become friendly with a possible rival and Sarah, who didn't even know me personally, had definitely made up her mind that I was the right person for her niece to marry. My journey home was an amusing one. I found the quickest route was via Canada, but I had to make my way by steamer to Sydney, and then travel from there to Brisbane. There I just managed to catch the boat with very few hours to spare and if my luck had not been in I would not have caught it. The steamer was small and old-fashioned and not a type that would be tolerated by travellers these days. I never enjoyed a journey across the sea more. There were only a few passengers, and I had the freedom of the officers' mess, and was allowed to go on the navigation bridge and interest myself in the running of the ship. The trouble with the great modern liner is that it is like an hotel, and except in very rough weather you are hardly conscious of being at sea. The great joy of the journey from the Antipodes to America is the break at Honolulu. It is one of the most pleasant spots in the world, and on my first visit it had not become sophisticated.

The Yank had not yet taken possession, there were no skyscrapers and monster hotels. It was still primitive and unspoilt, but the place is so charming that even the worst commercialism cannot destroy it. I have been there three times and on each occasion the ship was greeted by the playing of the town band, and each time we left the passengers were garlanded with flowers. I wonder if this delightful custom still exists as it does leave one with a very pleasant impression. The Hawaiians are a very attractive people and I do hope they will retain their characteristics. An immense

sea sweeps the shores of the island and one of the finest spots in the world is to go out on one of the native catamarans piloted by an Hawaiian and then, as you near the shore, be pushed overboard and be swept ashore by the surf. I have three times made the journey by train from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic, twice from Vancouver and once from San Francisco. In these days you speed over the continent by aeroplane and I cannot believe in the future people will make the long four-day journey by Pullman, which is wearisome in the extreme, except of course the part over the Rockies, which is a great experience and rivals any mountain scenery in the world. In those days trains had a way of breaking down and it was quite a common experience, in making a connection, to catch the train of the day before which had been held up by some fault in the engine or some block on the line.

But the main purpose of my journey was not sightseeing but romance.

I did reach London safely. I found my lady-love waiting for me at the station. We married on no less a date than 1st April, 1901, and we spent our honeymoon journeying back to New Zealand. One incident I must mention here because it is amusing to look back upon. We travelled across France to catch the Orient liner at Marseilles, and stayed the night at Paris. My wife had one ambition and that was to go for a ride on the latest invention of modern engineering, the motor-car. Motor-cars were virtually prohibited in England and the regulation still remained that no mechanically propelled vehicle should go on the road without being preceded by a man with a red flag! And so we searched Paris to find one of these curious vehicles and as a great treat for my bride took her for half an hour's drive in the Bois.

Perhaps one of the best experiences of this honeymoon visit to New Zealand was the walk we took from Lady Wanaka to Milford Sound through the bush and across the range of mountains. I believe these days the route is properly opened, but forty-four years ago there was only a rough track and we had to sleep in the most primitive bushman's hut with no bedding but tree fern, carrying our food on our backs. The scenery in its variety and beauty is unrivalled anywhere in the world and, at any rate in those days, completely unspoilt by the hand of man. Only one thing marred our pleasure and that was the plague of sand-flies and we had to wear thick nets over our heads which we couldn't move for a moment without being bitten to death. I used to forget that I was wearing this wretched net, and start to light my pipe through it. There are dozens of waterfalls along the route, and I remember the pleasure after a stuffy and restless night in one of the huts, to get up and stand under one of these falls and have my morning bath.

After a steep climb over the mountain range, when you reach snow level you descend rapidly and come down into Milford Sound, one of the finest fjords in the world, that compares with anything in Norway. Here, too, is one of the highest waterfalls in the world, called after its discoverer, Tom Sutherland, who was then still alive, and living in peace and harmony with his wife in a more or less primitive hut. He was one of the old pioneers and quite content to live there. This is not surprising as it is a beauty spot.

It can be by no means as isolated to-day, as trips to the sound are regularly organised by the Union Steamship Company. But if you wish to get real joy out of the scenery and appreciate it, the right way to approach it is by foot picking your way there by the aid of a guide as we did before it was opened up. One of the real pleasures of my second stay in New Zealand was riding over the country. Good horses were easy and cheap to hire, and my wife and I used to spend most of our week-ends on horseback exploring the country-side accompanied by my faithful cocker spaniel, who never seemed to tire, however far we went. There are good motor roads everywhere in New Zealand these days, and motor-cars are the order of the day. But my second son, Nicholas, who was recently there, found that horseback was still the best way to see the country. I am not sure that does not apply to most countries.

I am not going to say much more about New Zealand except to sing the praises of its people. When I was there they had not yet discovered their own identity but now they have got distinct characteristics of their own, and just as the Canadians and Australians, they have built up a conception of life and way of living quite their own. For the New Zealander has found himself. There is a definite intonation in speech which anyone who knows them cannot miss. It is not so definite as that of Canada and Australia, and it is certainly softer and less aggressive.

It is always dangerous to generalise but I should say the New Zealander is not a hustler and likes to take things easily. The forty-hour week has become general, and in most instances the five-day week with it. The people are physically fit as the All-Black football team has given eloquent testimony. They are intensely loyal to the British Commonwealth, and whenever the Mother Country has been in danger they have rushed to her aid. I was there during the South African War, and though the quarrel had little to do with them, when volunteers were called for they tumbled over each other to enlist and they were equipped largely out of voluntary funds. And so it was in 1914 and 1939. Here I cannot resist telling a story. I was sitting next to the King of Greece, after he came to this country following the surrender of his country to the German invader, and in the course of conversation

he asked me if there was any part of the British Empire that I was particularly interested in. I naturally replied New Zealand, and he remarked, "I know the New Zealanders well. When I was in Crete after I escaped from Greece I was given an escort of New Zealanders. They would never let me out of their sight, and guarded me like a mother does her child. One, a big rough fellow, said to me: 'If you ever come to my country you must come and stay.' But I said, 'Will you have room?' visualising a small hut up country. 'Room?' he answered. 'Why, I have twenty thousand sheep'," an answer that caused the King considerable amusement.

I remember speaking to Field-Marshal Dill about the New Zealanders, and he remarked that there were no better fighting men amongst all the Allies and none more reliable, and I am sure that evidence would be confirmed by any British general under whom they have fought.

CHAPTER III

THE 1906 ELECTION

IN 1903 I was back in London where my help was needed in the office, but I was not content with the scope it gave me.

The London School of Economics was still on a small scale, but I decided to rub up my political economy by attending evening classes. At the time they had a remarkable list of teachers including Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, and Cannan.

Professor Hewins had been appointed Head and he was proving himself an able administrator and extended the activities of the school. But he became infected by the Tariff Reform virus, and had become an active supporter of Joseph Chamberlain, who had just opened his campaign for Imperial Preference. When Hewins discovered that I had recently returned from New Zealand he began to take a great interest in me. He informed me he was looking out for young men for each of the Colonies—it was before the time they became known as Dominions—and suggested I should be his assistant for New Zealand. But, alas, I was a convinced Free Trader and did not respond to his approach. Meanwhile, Chamberlain's campaign was rousing Free Traders to action to defend their principles. Herbert Gladstone, afterwards Lord Gladstone, was the Chief Whip, and he did not see why the Tories should have a monopoly of colonial sympathy, so he started to make contact with people of Liberal sympathies in different parts of the Empire.

My father was approached, but he had no political ambitions. I was more responsive. Several constituencies were suggested to me and finally I was persuaded to consider the Ashford Division of Kent.

I was completely unconscious of the machinations of party organisers who are only too ready to sell you a pup. Later, when I became responsible for the political machine, I always tried to deal tenderly with the young aspirant for political honours, in the light of my own experience.

Ashford was a completely derelict constituency that had not been fought for a long time, with no organisation and nothing to work on. I had to start from the beginning. I was expected to be in my London office early every morning and was supposed to earn what salary I received to keep my wife and myself. And I could not travel about the Ashford Division and organise meetings without a considerable inroad into my income. It was before the general use of motor-cars, and I used to get about everywhere on my bicycle, catching early morning trains. I had to build up my organisation from its foundation and dig out Liberals. It was a large division extending from Marden on the north and going to Dungeness in the south, Chilham in the east and taking in Tenterden in the west. There was a great variety of interests in that part of Kent. Up in the north, it was one of the best hop-growing areas in the whole of England. South of Ashford there is a belt of good wheat-growing land, while down by the sea there are the Romney Marshes, which give their name to the well-known breed of sheep. In Ashford itself were the railway works of the South-Eastern Railway, now part of the Southern system, where they built the engines for the company. I got great support from the railway men. The engine boilers were built in those days by the well-known family of Goldsmith, father and sons, one of whom was secretary of the Liberal Association and still was in 1945. He is a sturdy, independent type of fellow, a great worker and of deep political conviction. I have never known any man with a greater sense of duty or better understanding of the fundamentals of Liberalism.

Across the centre of the constituency runs a belt of land known as the Weald of Kent, with a very strong Nonconformist and Protestant tradition. How strong it is was brought home to me in 1907 shortly after the election. I was invited to be present at the unveiling of the Martyrs' Memorial at the little village of Staplehurst, with only a few hundred inhabitants. When I reached there I found a crowd of 2,000 people. The Memorial had been erected to commemorate, not some recent event but the blessed martyrs who had died in the reign of "Bloody Mary," and the event seemed

as fresh to most of those present as if it had happened only the other day. In those circumstances it was not surprising the Balfour Education Act, which for the first time gave public money to denominational schools, was unpopular in the district and created a considerable opposition. But the trouble in a varied area like the Ashford Division is that what interested one village had very little appeal to another. One part was only concerned with the price of hops, which a few miles away meant nothing to the people. One farmer bought more corn than he grew, while a few miles away the character of the land changed and the price of wheat became of great importance.

Free Trade was, however, the burning issue, and to bring home to the ordinary man the importance of cheap bread, I had a loaf made showing the size of it under Free Trade, and another under Protection. At one place I went to, my chairman was a Mr. John Bull, a corn-grower. He opened the proceedings by explaining that he, and his father before him, had always been Liberals and he would always remain one, and that he agreed with Mr. Harris's father, Lord Harris (who, incidentally, was no relation of mine), that there should be a good big duty on corn. However, in spite of my speech and my election address I believe the old man voted for me. I had some very interesting constituents, who here might be worth mentioning. Charles Masterman had a brother who kept a school in the district, and one day I lunched with him and drove over to Hawkhurst with him to have tea with Frederick Harrison the Positivist, and here I met Henry James, the novelist. Harrison took the chair for me once at Hawkhurst, and gave me his support. Herbert Gladstone, then the Chief Liberal Whip, had a house at Littlestone, the well-known golf links that adjoin New Romney, where he gave me some help. One little incident I must mention, though it is hard to believe. A peer, one of the great landlords of the county, had been a Liberal but had become a Liberal Unionist. His agent, who himself claimed to be a Liberal, came to see me and explained his chief was mindful of the Liberal tradition of his family and would take no part in the election provided I kept out of his village. Every time I met him he repeated this and in my innocence I responded to his wishes. To my amazement, when the election was in full blast and it was too late to arrange further meetings, the noble lord took the chair for my opponent and attacked me personally. The people of the village expressed surprise that I had not been there. Naturally, therefore, I went over one afternoon and called on them. While I was walking round I discovered I was being followed by a lady who finally accosted me and asked me what I was doing interfering with her tenants. After I left, she called on the people and informed them

that those who voted for me she would regard as her enemies. On Polling Day carts decked out in Tory colours drove her villagers to the poll like sheep to the slaughter. I have always felt it was a shabby trick to have played on me and felt very tempted to expose it. The whole incident left a very unpleasant taste behind it.

Perhaps the most enjoyable event before the actual election was my tour through the division in a coach and four driven by its owner, Leonard Powell, an ardent Liberal. It was a very smart turn-out and we would rattle into a village with his horn blowing and gather a good crowd to be addressed by me and Charles Prescott, who was candidate for a neighbouring division. I know I had the majority of residents with me, and if it had been left to them I should have been Member for Ashford. But those were the days of plural voting. Elections were not all held on one day, as they are now. In different parts of the county the results began to go against the Tories. My election was one of the later ones, and so to make sure of holding my division, two thousand out-voters swarmed into it from all over the county and I was defeated by 390 votes. One incident I must mention. My wife and I had arranged that I was to drive round the division one way and she the other. When I arrived home at night I found she had not left home. She had been expecting her first baby, and owing to the excitement had been taken ill and the doctor had been sent for. He warned her that if she left the house there would almost certainly be a miscarriage. She therefore had to remain indoors. The doctor, who had been most kind, turned out to be the Chairman of the Conservative Association! My eldest son was duly born, and to celebrate the near miss in more respects than one, Ashford was included among his names. He uses it with pride and has included it in his son's names.

I never regretted my Ashford experience. I made a host of friends, and many, I am told, still remember me in that division. I learned a lot, especially about agriculture. I was for twenty-two years the member for Bethnal Green, as urban a district as any in the country, and it sometimes surprised and annoyed the House when I cut into some debate concerning agriculture: it was not generally known that I started my political career in a rural division. Besides, as I will show later, I did actually represent a county division during the 1914 war, and still further improved my stock of agricultural knowledge.

But, curiously enough, Bethnal Green was not so completely divorced from the production of food as some people think. I shall refer in another place to the Men's Institute, which I played some part in establishing in the borough. Mr. Wagstaff, the Head, found that many people in the side streets kept back-yarders. Under the

experienced supervision of Powell Owen, one of the greatest experts in the land, he started a poultry club, which had in 1939 over a hundred members, who won many prizes at the Crystal Palace Show with their birds and at the Home Counties Agricultural Show and elsewhere. Their own shows organised by the Bethnal Greeners themselves drew a large entry from all over the country. I brought down many distinguished visitors, including Ministers of Agriculture, to open the shows. They have an equally successful rabbit club, which has twice been opened by the Duke of Norfolk, when Under Secretary to the Board of Agriculture. Quite apart from these clubs being hobbies and adding to the food supply, they have done something to bring town and country together and promote understanding. More than one back-yard poultry breeder has opened up as a small-holder. But it is a long way from Ashford to Bethnal Green, and I had many experiences in between.

What a splendid Liberal Government we had in 1906, few as distinguished before, and none since quite up to its standard.

Henry Campbell-Bannerman was not a great orator or spell-binder, but he had sound common sense and excellent judgment. But above all he was a great Liberal and a man of fine principle. There were three men in his Government to win fame afterwards, as Prime Ministers: H. H. Asquith, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. There were in it well-known writers like Professor Bryce and Augustine Birrell, and among the Junior Ministers were Herbert Samuel, Walter Runciman and John Burns.

Alas, I was not there to cheer the great Liberal victory and help shape the legislation which in spite of the obstruction of the House of Lords was to do so much to improve the social conditions of the people.

Here I would like to mention a little experience I had the following summer. I became a member of the Eighty Club which had been formed in 1880 to celebrate the great Liberal victory. It was a somewhat highbrow society with headquarters in the Temple and largely run by lawyers with political ambitions. Qualification for membership was readiness and ability to speak for the Liberal Party anywhere and at any time, and the members did very good work for the cause.

As it happened the victory of the Liberal Party synchronised with a victory of the Party of Independence in Hungary, and they hastened to send an invitation to British Liberals to come to Budapest and join in celebrations.

Edward Grey, for obvious reasons, did not encourage the idea, but side-tracked it by handing the invitation to the Eighty Club, whose members jumped at the idea of an official visit to Hungary,

and there was no difficulty in making up the party of which I was a member.

The Party of Independence had considerable political implications and aimed at greater independence from Austria. On our standards they had little in common with our form of Liberalism. Our Hungarian friends, however, thought otherwise, and claimed to regard us as blood brothers.

On our way out we stayed at Vienna and were astonished to find that our visit was already in the public eye. The Press was full of it and it was seriously suggested that we were attempting to interfere in the internal relations of the Dual Monarchy. At home *The Times* found it necessary to write a leading article on the subject. But whatever their motives, the Hungarians gave us a royal welcome. They placed a special train at our disposal, took us all round the country and banqueted us, even showering on us caviare and Imperial Tokay. The Magyars are a delightful people naturally friendly and hospitable, but of course from Liberal standards very behind the times politically. They claimed to be a superior race and they gave short shift to their minorities. However, their Parliament had much in common with our British institution and as far as the Hungarians themselves were concerned they did adhere to democratic forms.

Two very remarkable men were at the head of the Party of Independence, Kossuth, son of the revolutionary leader who fought so well for Hungarian independence, and Count Apponyi, who in his later years played a distinguished part in the League of Nations. But most of the leaders were aristocrats and, incidentally, very charming, opening their private houses to our members. We made a complete tour of the country.

I am all for the exchange of visits between politicians and I afterwards became treasurer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The mistake only too often made is to judge other countries by our own standards. Continental Liberalism had a very different history from our own, and the same might be said with even greater force of Continental Socialism. But if ever the saying "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" is true it is certainly applicable to these conducted tours. I have made various journeys to foreign countries as a guest, and have come to the conclusion that on the whole you learn more going abroad on your own than by any number of shepherded visits where you only see just what your hosts think is good for you to see.

CHAPTER IV

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

AFTER my defeat at Ashford, I was not to mark time for long. Many Progressive Members of the London County Council had, in 1906, been elected Members of Parliament, and most of them found it difficult to combine the two jobs and decided not to seek re-election in 1907. Among them was Thomas Wiles, afterwards to become a Privy Councillor and Chairman of the Port of London. I was living at that time on Campden Hill, where he was my neighbour, and he suggested that it would be a good thing for me to succeed him at the County Hall, where he represented South-west Bethnal Green. But he explained that all he could do was to suggest my name to the Local Association where it would be considered with a number of others. I have a vivid memory of going down to the old Radical Club in Pollard Row and meeting the Executive of the Association which then consisted of Lewis, the secretary of the club and a prominent trade unionist, Tom Brooks, a chimney sweep, afterwards Mayor of the borough, and my chairman, Salmon, a local independent bill-poster, and one or two others. They made it clear to me they had no power other than to say I was a suitable person, but the decision must rest with a very large body drawn from every section of the division. Actually, four names were submitted for selection by the Liberals: two former members of the School Board, the then Mayor, and myself.

Here I must mention one of the names submitted, afterwards to be my colleague and friend for eighteen years. The Rev. Stewart Headlam was a striking personality, who for many years played a prominent part in the East End. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, he entered the Church and became a curate at St. Matthew's, Bethnal Green. But he was no ordinary clergyman, content to devote himself to parish duties. On the contrary, he entered into the life and soul of the people down there, interesting himself in every phase of their lives. He was not content to preach the gospel only from the pulpit on Sundays, but was prepared to cross swords with all and sundry on all the controversies of the day. Atheism was rampant in those days but he wasn't afraid to face up to it and even went to the length of discussing religion with Brad-laugh on a Sunday at a public meeting which shocked the stay-at-home Christians of his day. He was intensely interested in music and the drama, and not less in the ballet. Many of the girls that danced at the Alhambra came from the East End and most of them

from respectable homes. But the idea prevailed in those Victorian days that you could not dance for a living and remain respectable. Headlam took up the challenge and started a religious service for ballet girls which upset the then Bishop of London, Dr. Temple, afterwards Archbishop and father of another Archbishop. He threatened to unfrock Headlam for his irregular conduct but Headlam countered by asking the pertinent question, "What would Christ have done?" Headlam was intensely serious about his mission. He believed in beauty, in good music, in good drama, in good dancing, and was convinced of their civilising influences. He helped to form the Guild of St. Matthew which aimed at associating religion with art, and bringing together the craftsmen and the London teachers. But he was interested, too, in politics, and was a friend of William Morris, Bernard Shaw and the Sidney Webbs, and became one of the founders of the Fabian Society. He had his own views on almost every subject and never hesitated to express them however unpopular they might be. He had no use for teetotallers and used to go out of his way to enter public-houses and drink beer with those who walked in out of the streets. As a clergyman walking into a pub he hoped to raise the standard of the place. He hated inhibitions and at the same time believed passionately in religion and the fundamental good of mankind. He was fond of saying, "Make no more Giants, O Lord: raise the race." And he never spared himself to achieve his ends. He became an active member of the School Board and threw all his energies into improving the schools. He made it his business to know most of the teachers in the East End by name, and was always in and out of the schools. Nothing was too good for his East End children and he would never be put off by the second best. But his special hobby was the Evening Institutes. Night after night he would go round them, encouraging the heads, finding out what was wrong or if there were any deficiencies that could be remedied. And of course he aimed at making them delightful places instead of mere machines for pumping in learning. Dancing and the drama he particularly encouraged, especially the acting of Shakespeare. Nothing but the best was good enough for his boys and girls.

That was the man that I first met in 1907. The School Board had just been abolished: he was furious at the legislation that brought it to an end and suspended his educational activities. The Board had done great work and he objected to it being handed over to the L.C.C. and becoming one of a crowd of subjects along with main drainage and the Fire Brigade. He was fond of saying that he believed in an *ad hoc* body, and I am afraid his audiences only vaguely understood what he meant by these two Latin words, but they believed in him and whatever he said, stood.

His adoption was a foregone conclusion but there were three of us offering ourselves for the second seat. We met at the old Town Hall, in Church Row, where a couple of hundred working men were assembled to make the selection, and they took the job very seriously. They were going to stand no dictatorship from above. The four candidates were each given fifteen minutes and then had to submit to a torrent of questions. The final one was to ask us each in turn if we would accept the decision of the meeting as final. My reply to this was not only would I accept their decision but I would come and work for the successful candidate, an answer, I am afraid, that elicited loud cheers and appealed to the sporting instincts of my audience. In due course Harris and Headlam were adopted as the Progressive candidates for the coming election. But this was only the first hurdle to jump. I was to face a very hot electoral contest. There were five candidates for two seats: two Progressives, two Municipal Reformers and one Labour man: Headlam and myself, Harper and Montefiore, and Harley. At my first meeting our chairman, who was a good speaker, could not pronounce his H's. He called attention to the curious fact that "at this 'ere election four of the five candidates' names commence with H, 'Arris and 'Eadlam, and 'Arley and 'Arper"!

Headlam was so well known in the division that his election was more or less assured, but I was a comparative stranger and the other three candidates made a dead set at me. However, Headlam was a very loyal colleague and at every meeting he insisted that he did not want to be elected if he wasn't to have his "young friend" with him to look after the other side of the Council's work, as he wanted to specialise on education. We were both triumphantly returned at the head of the poll. In those days it was the custom, in that division, to go after the election to the Pollard Row Club. The results were generally declared on a Saturday, and there was always a music-hall entertainment with a number of turns, and with an old-fashioned chairman with his back to the audience, whose business it was to keep order. Beer was served in the auditorium and the men brought their wives who, often as not, brought their babies with them. When we arrived triumphantly from the Town Hall there would, perhaps, be a girl in tights in the middle of a sentimental song, or a comic with a red nose doing his turn, and much to their indignation they would be pushed off the stage, the curtain rung down, the chairman announcing a special turn. We were then pushed on the stage for five minutes to say a few appropriate words and received with loud cheers. The entertainment was then allowed to proceed.

Our success was not repeated in other parts of London. For eighteen years the Progressives had had a majority at County Hall,

but in 1907 they were to suffer defeat and find themselves, for the first time, in a minority: in all my long experience of public life I was always in a minority party except for one or two short intervals.

Here, perhaps, I should pause to say something about London's great experiment in local government, but before I do so I want to indulge in a little history.

In 1832, a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the Municipal Corporations of England and Wales, but the City of London was considered to present such special problems of its own that the Commissioners did not publish their recommendations dealing with it until 1837.

Meanwhile legislation had already been passed to reform provincial towns and enable them to abolish their outside areas.

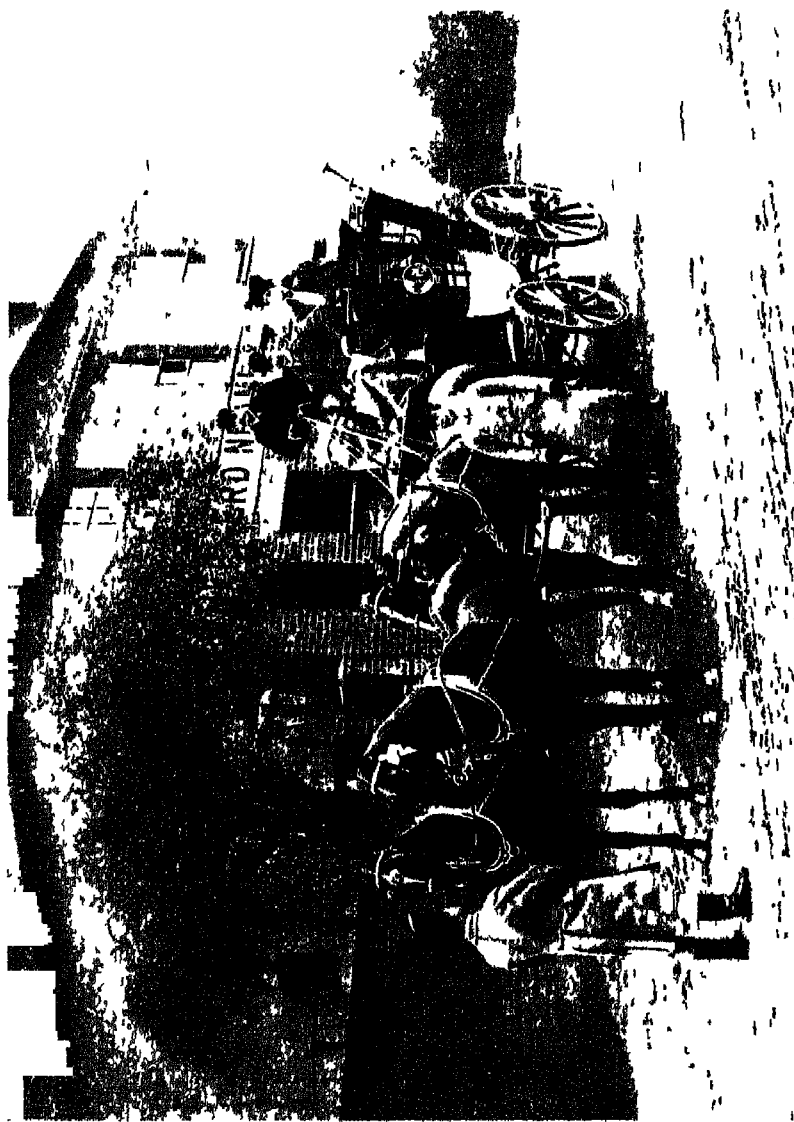
But when they did issue their belated report they expressed the opinion that they "did not find any argument on which the course pursued with regard to other towns could be justified which did not apply with the same force to London, unless the magnitude of the change in this case should be considered as converting that which otherwise would be only a practical difficulty into an obligation of principle . . . they were unable to discover any circumstance justifying the distinction of the area within the municipal boundary from the rest, except that in fact it was and had long been so distinguished."

Threatened institutions live long, and the one square mile of the City still remains in its privileged position more or less unreformed. I have written a book on London and its government and this is not the place to follow the struggle for reform. But here it can be said that all attempts to persuade the City of London to conform to the general pattern of English local government signally failed, and it still goes on in all its gilded glory. The City Corporation with its great wealth and prestige and backed by the great City Guilds and their friends was determined to keep its ancient privileges intact, and refused to share them with the vast population living outside the boundaries of the old City walls. For many years there was no ordered London government outside the square mile of the City except for the open vestry or parish meeting. The conditions of London were so appalling that something had to be done. In 1854 another Royal Commission reported and under the Act passed as a result of its recommendations, twenty-three of the larger parishes of London became vestries, while the smaller ones were grouped into districts to be managed by district boards. But for certain common purposes, the chief of which was main drainage, these vestries were to send delegates to what was to be called the Metropolitan Board of Works. In other words, this first authority for the whole of London was little more than a

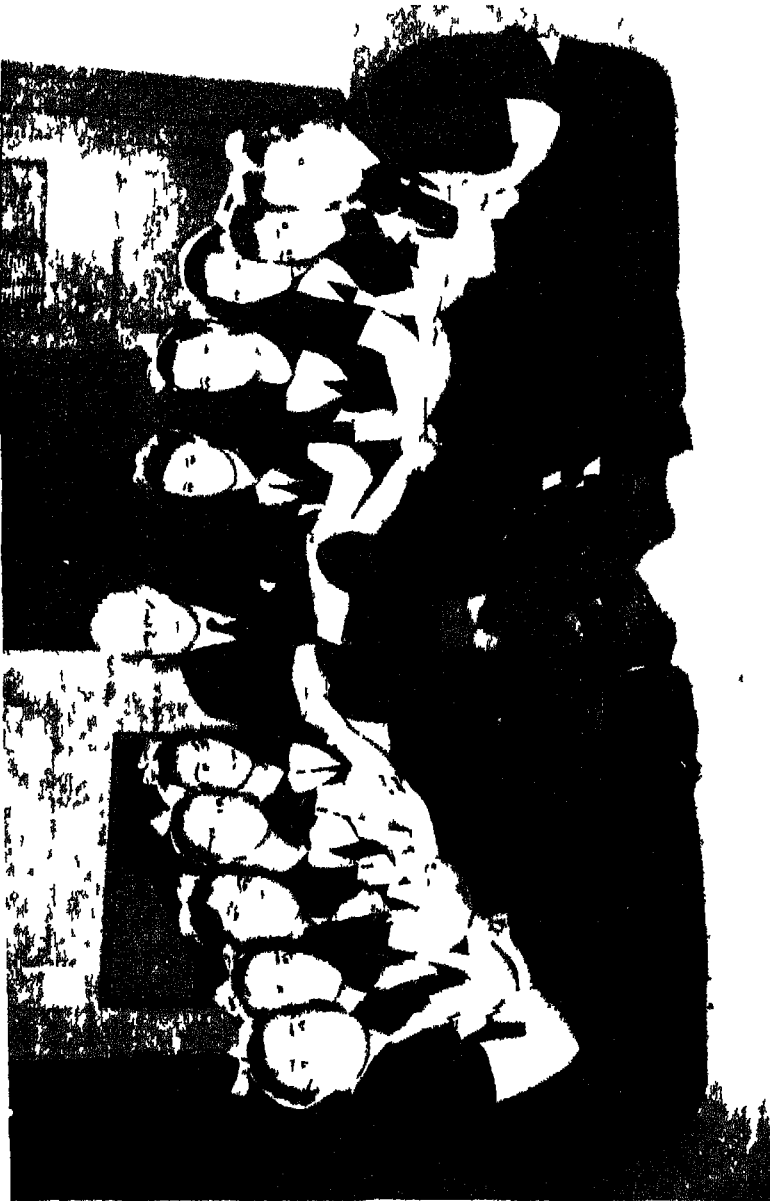
drainage board. However, its functions were gradually added to, including such duties as open spaces and finally housing. One of its greatest achievements was the construction of the Thames Embankment. But though it did some good work, the public took very little interest in its proceedings, its members had no direct contact with the electors, and finally it was brought into discredit by charges of corruption. No one dared apply the obvious remedy and follow the precedent that gave good government to provincial cities. Every year at the Lord Mayor's banquet, Ministers toasted the City Corporation and by implication pledged themselves to safeguard its privileges. In 1945, with a Labour Government in power, the City's privileges seem as firmly entrenched as ever, though its night population is reduced to a few thousand caretakers and charwomen.

In despair, the Conservative Government in 1889 hit on the ingenious idea of turning London into a county. County councils had just been set up for rural England, and though London's problems were urban and cried out for municipal treatment she was provided with county government. And so was born the L.C.C. London was quick to take advantage of this opportunity for self-government. A splendid lot of young men, many of them afterwards to win fame, offered to contest seats. London problems were crying out for remedies, and many men and women of progressive views, irrespective of national party predilection, banded themselves together to solve them. They stood not as Liberals or Socialists, but as Progressives, while those who thought they were going too fast called themselves Moderates. But the Progressives won hands down, and though London might vote Conservative in the Parliamentary election, for eighteen years it remained loyal to the Progressive Party. Lord Rosebery was its first chairman, and in the Progressive ranks were men of every shade of opinion, experienced administrators like Lord Monkswell and Lord Welby, keen Liberals like McKinnon Wood, John Benn, Willoughby Dickinson, and William Collins, prominent Labour men and trade unionists such as John Burns, Will Crooks and Harry Gosling. It was a fine team: these men changed the shape of London and did much, within the limited powers conferred on them, to sweep it clean. The Progressive Party seemed firmly entrenched and for eighteen years had stood successfully against repeated assaults by its critics at the triennial L.C.C. elections.

But a strange thing happened. 1906 was the year of the great Liberal Parliamentary victory and London shared in the triumph and sent more than its quota of Liberal members to the House of Commons. But the Tories were determined to have their revenge and redeem their prestige by capturing the L.C.C. The first thing



Sir Percy Harris and his wife driving with Sir Leonard Powell in the Ashford
Division of Kent in 1906
See page 35



Sir Percy Harris with keep fit class Daniel Street Evening Institute
see page 34

they did was to change their name from Moderates to the more attractive title of Municipal Reformers, a skilful camouflage of their Tory association. They then organised a skilful campaign of insinuation, suggesting waste and even corruption. One of the cleverest posters ever devised covered the hoardings showing a hideous figure pointing and saying, "It's your money we want," which was calculated to make the blood of the average ratepayer run cold. There was not a word of truth in the suggestion that there had been waste of money at County Hall. On the contrary, London's finances had been under the care of Lord Welby, an ex-permanent head of the Treasury. The Finance Committee had a system of control that has ever since been almost slavishly adhered to and afterwards won the admiration of successive Conservative chairmen. But anything was good enough for the propagandists, anxious to capture the machine of London government. The Progressives had attempted to grapple with London's urgent housing problem, then, and since, still unsolved, and in the process they had bought a number of estates on the outskirts, including an excellent one at Norbury which happened to have on it a brick-field. The Housing Committee, not unnaturally, decided to keep the brick-field running and use the bricks on the spot to put into building cottages. This was exploited to the full and exposed as rank Socialism. Men were hired to parade the streets with hods of bricks to warn Londoners of the Socialism that was in store for them if they once again supported the wicked profligate Progressives.

The campaign had its effect, and in 1907 the Progressives found themselves in a minority at the County Hall for the first time since the L.C.C. had come into being. The Progressives never recovered their position and when, finally, the Municipal Reformers were beaten it was by the Labour Party in 1934. The L.C.C. then met at the old County Hall, in Spring Gardens, adjacent to Trafalgar Square and facing St. James's Park, near by the present Admiralty Arch. It was a very unpretentious building quite without the marble magnificence of the new County Hall. But the acoustics were much better and there was a much more friendly and intimate atmosphere than at the grand palace which now houses the Council. Behind the Debating Chamber there was a room with a long table at which members at tea could rub shoulders with each other and get to know one another, irrespective of party affiliation.

Headlam and I were almost the only two new members on the Progressive side, but McKinnon Wood, their leader, was still a member, as were John Benn, Sidney Webb, Harry Gosling and Will Crooks. We were still a very virile party and able to give a good account of ourselves. Of course there were a lot of new recruits on the Municipal Reform side, two of whom had been in a Tory

Government, Hayes Fisher, a former Tory Minister and a very able debater, who could hit hard, and Lord Midleton, better known as St. John Brodrick, a former Secretary of State for War. He was a strange man with very little sense of humour. I met him one day coming out of the County Hall looking distressed, and I asked him if anything was wrong. "Oh, yes," he said, "I have lost my umbrella." Holding up the one I held in my hand I said humorously, "Is this it by any chance?" He examined it suspiciously and replied in the negative. "Ah," I said, "that's the danger of belonging to a Socialist body like the L.C.C. Most members regard umbrellas as articles to be owned in common." "Oh," he said, looking worried, "do they really regard them in that way?" And without a smile he apparently swallowed my statement.

McKinnon Wood was a doughty leader and scored a great debating success on the presentation of the annual estimates, when he exposed how baseless was the suggestion that the finances of the Council were irregular. But he wasn't to remain long with us, as in due course he resigned the leadership and concentrated on his work at the House of Commons. He by no means fulfilled the success there that his work at the L.C.C. seemed to promise. He was excellent in a business discussion and the analysis of figures but not so good in the cut and thrust of debate. He was succeeded by Sir John Benn, an interesting character. Benn had a great sense of the dramatic. At one time in his early days he had done lightning sketches, and at his home on Blackheath he had built a miniature theatre where he used to put on plays with the help of his family, always playing an important part in them himself. His two sons have won distinction in public life in opposite directions. The elder, Ernest, is the champion of individualism and the defender of capitalism, and with a healthy suspicion of State interference in any form or shape. The younger, Wedgwood Benn, was first a Liberal M.P.: he later joined the Labour Party, becoming Secretary of State for India in the second Labour Government: he was made a peer and became Secretary of State for Air and an advocate of Socialism. Both have inherited their father's gift of speech and both claim to be heirs of his political faith. That is only by the way. John Benn, as leader of the Progressives, put great punch into the debates, while his sense of the dramatic provoked controversy. His special child was the tramways which he had played a big part in persuading the Council to take over from the companies and electrify. The London trams were run on the conduit system but the Municipal Reformers, in their effort to discredit everything done by their predecessors, condemned the system as extravagant, and experimented in a stud system which they claimed was cheaper and equally effective. Unfortunately,

during the experiment a horse was killed and Benn made great play with this in his own inimitable way. Unfortunately the owners of the patent resented this criticism and brought an action for libel which in the first court they won, Benn being mulcted in heavy damages which was a very serious matter for him. But his friends stood by him, and on appeal the decision was reversed. We had many stormy sittings and the L.C.C. came very much into the public eye. All-night sittings were quite common and we fought gallantly to save the work initiated by the Progressives, such as the Works Department. We then very nearly were able to claim to be a united front and in 1910 we almost reversed the decision of 1907 but the Municipal Reformers had the Aldermen and were still able to remain in power. Somehow or other the Council of recent years has gone out of the limelight and one hears very little about its proceedings.

The galleries used to be crowded and London took a real interest in the Council's work. It was thought that when County Hall was moved to its new site on the banks of the Thames and was properly housed in a fine building we should be more than ever in the public eye. The exact contrary is the case. Whether it is the debates are duller or that the public has lost interest in municipal affairs I would not like to say. But I am sure it was healthier when the Press did take more notice of the Tuesday public sessions of the L.C.C. Although the trams have gone over to the London Transport Board, the work of the County Hall has expanded and the staff has greatly increased; it has absorbed the work both of the Poor Law Guardians and the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The public hospitals have been a big responsibility though under the new Health Bill they are to be handed over to Regional Boards. I believe the Progressive Party both in and out of office did great work and deserved the gratitude of London. But the last thing one must expect from public life is thanks. I don't complain, though I would like to see in London more of the spirit that inspired the Progressives. I became Chief Whip of the Party in 1910 and tried hard to restore their fallen fortunes. I specialised in housing and served twenty-eight years on the committee charged with looking after this problem. The one thing about local government in those days was that however bitter the controversy in the debating chamber, each member did take a share in administration. Though the Chairman of the Committee assumed greater responsibility, the members all took part in the work and it was not uncommon for them to outvote him. In his old School Board days Headlam had gone in and out of the schools and inspired by his example I did the same. It gave me an inner knowledge of the schools which members who devote many hours to reading official reports or attending

committees often fail to acquire. I learned to love the children and the teachers and I am always grateful to Headlam for initiating me into this practice. Many of the teachers became my personal friends and used to come to my house and discuss with me their difficulties.

The health and condition of the children have much improved in the last twenty-five years though there still remains much to be done. I attribute much of this improvement to a comparatively small measure passed by the Liberal Government in 1910. This was the Necessitous Children Act, which enabled local authorities to feed schoolchildren who owing to malnutrition were unable to benefit by their education. In these days that sounds a harmless enough measure, but when it first came into operation it caused a great amount of controversy. The Municipal Reformers were prepared to operate the Act but wanted the money to be found by charity and public subscriptions. Headlam and I ardently desired the L.C.C. to take full responsibility and defray the cost, not likely to be heavy, out of the rates. Actually, if the parents could afford to pay, the money was collected from them. At the same time the Council had decided to erect a flagstaff at every school within the county, a harmless enough proposal in itself. But I could not resist the temptation to move an amendment to the proposal when it appeared on the order paper, "The money allocated to putting up flagstaffs should be used to feed necessitous children." As Headlam aptly put it, "They asked for the staff of life, they gave them instead a flagstaff." In 1910, the nation was plunged into controversy over the great People's Budget and the dispute with the House of Lords on its claim to reject a money bill. Feeling ran high and a General Election became inevitable. Measure after measure of the Liberal Government was either mutilated or rejected.

I was approached to contest the Harrow Division of Middlesex. A Liberal had won it by a small majority in 1906, it was convenient to work from London, and I had been at school there. But great changes were taking place in the area, new houses were being run up by the speculative builder and its character was completely altering. Since I fought it, it has been cut up to form about eight constituencies. When I got going I found there was little or no organisation, plenty of enthusiasm but no arrangement to canalise it. Politicians will think that electors belong to one of three parties. On the contrary, the majority of them have only definite views at election time, and even then much depends on a comparatively few keen politicians working up enthusiasm. I never had before or since such splendid meetings as I had at that election. Every night outside my committee rooms in Willesden hundreds of young men would await my return singing and cheering. The subject

that aroused the greatest interest in that division was the Land Clauses of the Budget. At every meeting my supporters would sing with gusto the land song:

“The land, the land, it is God who gave the land,
Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hand?
God gave the land to the people.”

And well they might sing like that. If ever there was exploitation of land it was on the outskirts of London! Alas, young men who cheered me so lustily did not put in any spade work, and most of them had not even votes under the law as it then was. When it came to the count, which was long drawn out and not finished until one a.m., I could hear them still singing the land song and cheering my name as the piles of Mallaby-Deeley's ballot papers mounted up, out-numbering mine by thousands.

My opponent, Mallaby-Deeley, had won considerable fame in various business transactions, but he knew little and cared less about politics. After the 1914-1918 war he ran a stunt for standard clothing. He also caused a sensation by buying Covent Garden. At the time of the 1910 election he had just bought the Piccadilly Hotel and was responsible for it for a short time, which brings me to an incident worth relating. The Tories were running Tariff Reform for all it was worth, and to bring home the evils of Free Trade produced an effective poster of a man leaning on his hands in obvious despair, surrounded by his poverty-stricken family. Under the picture was the slogan “The foreigner has got my job.” One day a man called in who was living in the division and who was a cook by trade and who was out of work. He had applied for a job at the Piccadilly Hotel and was asked what nationality he was, and when he replied, English, was told that that was no use, as they only employed foreigners. The man was naturally indignant, and had sketched a poster in large type, “The foreigner has got my job at the Piccadilly Hotel. Ask Mr. Mallaby-Deeley why.” He was very anxious for me to use it as an effective counter to the Tory stunt, but I have never had any use for personalities in an election, and I did not agree to the idea.

In Harrow itself I received active support from two popular masters from the school on the hill, Graham and Owen. Graham was a splendid helper and used to speak for me at street-corner meetings, which meant something in those days before the loud-speaker.

I was advised to call on the then headmaster, Dr. Wood, who was said to be a Liberal. He received me sympathetically and admitted he had always regarded himself as a Liberal, but he

explained he could not vote Liberal for two special reasons. First, the Government was taxing his land under the Budget, and secondly, he had no use for an old Harrow boy who was in the Cabinet! When I asked who that was I got the reply, "Winston Churchill," to whom he had taken a special dislike. Therefore, 1945 was not the first time Winston lost me a vote.

An incident of another kind is here worth mentioning. At one of my meetings I noticed a man in the audience whose face was familiar to me but whom I could not place. He was following my speech with obvious interest and afterwards came up and spoke to me. We met on several occasions afterwards. Harrow was endowed by one, John Lyon, "Yeoman John" as the school song describes him, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, as a grammar school. The residents of Harrow town had argued at the end of the nineteenth century that their sons should be entitled to go to their own grammar schools as a right, and a serious dispute was threatened. To prevent controversy and to do justice to local claims the Governors helped to set up the "Lower School of John Lyon," a secondary day school for the townspeople. It had been intended that specially clever boys should proceed to "Harrow School" proper, but that did not eventuate. But one boy at the Lower School showed such exceptional abilities that the Governors decided to admit him. He rose rapidly and soon reached the Upper Sixth. He was a fine athlete, one of the best long-distance runners ever turned out from the school, won his blue at Cambridge, where he went with the aid of a scholarship. He came from a good home, his father being a small builder in the town. This was the man I had noticed and who had been at Harrow with me. But he revealed that during his time at school he had been subject to many humiliations. It was conveyed to him by some of the masters that he was only at Harrow by sufferance and he was made to feel he was not wanted. A sensitive man, he had never quite forgotten or forgiven this attitude. From Cambridge he went into the Indian Civil Service and carried with him there memories of the snobbery he had suffered from as a boy. Maybe my friend was unduly sensitive and exaggerated the attitude of mind of one or two pedagogues. But I am satisfied there was something in what he said. I remember how the school tradition was that we were something superior to the town boys, whom we classed more or less as "Chaws," to be avoided and looked down on. The blame was not entirely on our side. The town boys did laugh at us with our Eton jackets and tail coats and white, flat straw hats. I have no doubt there is a different spirit to-day: anyhow, I hope so. The public schools have done great work for education and inculcated a fine tradition of service into the minds of countless generations of young

people, and they must not be the breeding place of snobbery and class-consciousness. Entry must not be by capacity to pay high fees, but ability to benefit from the educational facilities provided. I did not stand again for the Harrow Division of Middlesex. I received a handsome presentation of plate and many thanks, but my official link with it was severed by my defeat.

I returned to my work at the L.C.C., where there was always plenty to occupy my energies.

But I was not to keep out of national politics. The secretary of the Liberal Association in Bethnal Green met me at an official function and told me that there was a persistent rumour that their local M.P. was likely to become a stipendiary magistrate, that there would be a parliamentary by-election, and there was a general desire I should be the candidate. He pressed me to say that I was willing, and I saw no reason to say no.

The member for the division was E. H. Pickersgill. He had been there a long time, had lost the seat in the Khaki Election of 1901, but won it back in 1906 and held it again in the 1910 election.

He was a shy, reserved man and he had few personal friends, either in or out of the House. His constituents familiarly called him "Pick," but the story goes that when any of them stopped him in the street and greeted him by his nickname he invariably said, "My name is E. H. Pickersgill." He was as poor as a church mouse, refused to take help from the Whips' office, and used to start saving at the end of one election to pay the costs of the next. Two elections in one year had hit him hard, and in 1911 he was very hard up. In spite of his excellent qualities and his undoubted abilities, he had not won much distinction in the House of Commons, and he began to feel he was wasting his energies. He was a barrister, but briefs did not often come his way, and he made up his mind he would like to become a stipendiary magistrate, a job for which he felt he was peculiarly fitted. He had conveyed this to the appropriate quarter. Events were to work in his favour.

In the House of Commons was a very brilliant young man, C. F. G. Masterman, who had already begun to climb the political ladder. But he was a bit vague in business matters and an incompetent agent had been guilty of irregularities at his election, with the result he was unseated. He was Under Secretary to Winston Churchill, at the Home Office, and he had been engaged in piloting through the House of Commons a Miners' Wages Bill. The Government wanted him back, and Pickersgill's modest ambition seemed to provide the opportunity.

One day I got a request from Wedgwood Benn, who was the Government London Whip, to call and see him at the House. He

proceeded to cross-examine me closely about the state of the organisation in S.W. Bethnal Green. When I asked him if there was any special reason for this sudden interest in the division, and whether a by-election was contemplated, he indignantly repudiated such a suggestion. However, a few weeks afterwards I received another invitation to call on him, when he apologised for his misleading reply on the previous occasion, and informed me that Pickersgill was to be made a police court magistrate but he had been pledged to keep it secret. The appointment would vacate his seat in Parliament. I told him I had already been approached by the local Liberal Association, that they particularly wanted me to be the candidate, that I had already fought two difficult seats, and I saw no reason why I should stand down. He said they knew all this, but that Pickersgill had been told, and agreed, that if Masterman were not adopted, his appointment as magistrate would not be gazetted. I replied I could not believe Pickersgill would lend himself to such a bargain. Benn therefore insisted on driving me round to Pickersgill's chambers, where I found he had accepted the conditions. He pleaded eloquently with me to stand aside, said he was quite sure that if I did not I would be adopted but that he would continue in the House of Commons, and I would not get the seat, that he would be deprived of his ambition to be a stipendiary, while a brilliant young Minister would remain out of Parliament. I was in a quandary. I was not in public life for what I could get out of it and I did not like to press what looked like my personal advantage. The Chief Whip, Elibank, added his appeal and in the end I acquiesced. I think now I was wrong; I should have stood firm, as events proved.

A meeting of the local association was called. Masterman was there and his name was submitted. Someone at the back of the hall moved my name as an alternative and it was received with cheers. I had to refuse, someone shouting out that I had been bought. A number of angry Radicals walked out of the meeting, formed a Labour Association, and proceeded to adopt a candidate.

The by-election was a lively one but Masterman was duly elected. But, alas, he was not to remain member for long.

Under the law as it then stood, if a member occupied an office of profit under the Crown, he had to seek re-election. It did not include Under Secretaries, but when Masterman was promoted to be Chancellor of the Duchy, there had to be another by-election in Bethnal Green. At this time the Health Insurance Bill was before Parliament, stirring up a lot of sectional interest, which the Tories exploited to the full. The suffragettes were on the rampage, and a Labour candidate appeared in the field. All these forces combined, proved too much for Masterman, and he lost the seat by

a small majority. He did not get back to the House of Commons until 1922. Nor did Pickersgill live long to enjoy his position as a magistrate, dying about a year after his appointment. So my abnegation achieved no useful result! All this time I was carrying on my work at the L.C.C. I cannot conclude better than by making reference to some of the men and women who impressed themselves on my mind. I have a vivid memory of Miss Susan Lawrence who, when I was first on the Council, was a member of the Municipal Reform Party, and was regarded as a dyed-in-the-wool Tory. Her appearance was impressive. She generally wore an eye-glass and very smart tailor-made costumes. In her leisure she drove a dashing dog-cart in Hyde Park, and was notorious for her hard and unsympathetic attitude to social problems. But suddenly she completely changed. Her party appointed her to investigate the wages and social conditions of school cleaners, and she was so impressed with what her inquiry revealed, that she not only severed her connection with her party, but resigned her seat on the Council. I thought, perhaps, she might wish to join the Progressives and wrote to her. But though she appreciated the gesture, she replied that she had decided to join the Labour Party, and she did. Most of the Labour men in those days accepted the Progressive Whip. In the 1910 Council, an independent Labour section of three members was formed, W. S. Sanders, R. C. K. Ensor and Susan Lawrence. Miss Lawrence was no half-hearted convert. A brilliant debater, she hit hard and did not spare her erstwhile friends. Her smart clothes and style were discarded, and her appearance became that of a hard-working Socialist member. She was a tremendous worker, as anyone associated with her would quickly discover. Later she was to enter the House of Commons and win fame there as a ready debater, and finally as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health in the second Labour Government. She lost her seat in the general set-back of 1931 and seems to have faded out of public life. But she was a great personality and had the courage of her opinions.

Of very different type was Harry Gosling, secretary of the Watermen and Lightermen's Union, a trade with which his family could trace their association for many generations back. He became, before his death, general secretary of the Transport Workers' Union, Ernest Bevin's great organisation. He had very little use for "isms." The ordinary man, he used to say, has very little interest in abstract theories. What he understands is a penny an hour on his wages. He had a dry wit and great wisdom. You could almost see him walking up and down a London barge, piloting it along the River Thames. For many years he represented Limehouse on the L.C.C., with my dear friend Charles Mathew, K.C.,

a son of Lord Justice Mathew and nephew of Father Matthew, a great Irish Catholic preacher. He had all the ready wit of the Irish, coupled with sound legal knowledge. He and I worked very closely together until he left us to join Labour, but that did not end our friendship. He became a Law Officer in the first ill-fated Labour Government, but died almost immediately afterwards under an operation. Many a delightful day we had together discussing political problems along with his charming wife, Anna Mathew, afterwards to succeed him as a Labour member on the L.C.C. I remember how she worshipped her husband. We often had long arguments on all sorts of problems, but when she said, "Anyhow, Charles says so," I knew there was no more to be said.

I always thought by far the ablest man on the Municipal Reformers' side was R. C. Norman, brother of Lord Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England. He would certainly have made a position for himself in the House of Commons had he gone there. But, I understand, he was a convinced Free Trader, and it was characteristic of the man that he would not adjust his opinions or compromise them in order to gain position. He was a Conservative and never pretended to be anything else. But he never made a false point and I found him always a difficult man to reply to, because he never left a weak spot in his armour. Norman was for some time leader of the Council and his Chief Whip was one of very different kidney, Henry Lygon, half-brother of Lord Beauchamp. We used to call him the pink baby, with his pink face and always wearing a very pink shirt. Gay, smart, and up to any lark, he was always ready for a scrap on any subject. I remember a by-election at Bermondsey, when the Tory candidate was one Dumphries. Henry Lygon went down to help him, and when he got there he was sent to an open-air meeting, where he found four Tariff Reform orators with great difficulty holding the fort against an unfriendly crowd. They pulled him on to the van and persuaded him to speak at once. Hardly had he got well started when someone in the crowd asked, "How much do you get paid for this?" Indignantly he answered, "I have never received payment for speaking: I wouldn't think of taking a fee." The heckler then pointed to the four professional speakers and remarked, "Then you are nothing but a bloody blackleg." Collapse of Henry Lygon who, however, thoroughly enjoyed the joke. He was a general favourite and promised to be a successful politician. But I think he had bad judgment. He failed to get into Parliament in 1918 in the Tory wave, and then left politics for business.

Two other names I should like to mention, i.e., the brothers Gilbert. They sat on opposite sides of the Council. John was a Municipal Reformer and an ardent Roman Catholic, the other was

a Progressive and an agnostic. They never spoke to each other, though I made several attempts to bring them together. John was an ascetic and he looked it; he almost literally lived on the "smell of an oil rag." Certainly he did not spend any money on himself and he could not understand why teachers and others could not live on the money they received. But he was an able man and fought desperately for the rights and privileges of the Catholic schools. For many years he was Chairman of the Education Committee, and finally became Chairman of the Council. He and Susan Lawrence were always at loggerheads, and the debates between them often were bitter and personal.

J. D. Gilbert, the other brother, was not unlike John in appearance, but his temperament was very different. He loved details and was an expert at questions at the Council, and afterwards in the House of Commons, of which later on he became a member.

Those were great days at the old County Hall. I liked the work there and one did feel one was serving the people of London.

But in 1914 events were to take place that were to switch people's minds from the daily round, the common task!

CHAPTER V

THE VOLUNTEERS

My wife and I had found a wooden cottage down at Winchelsea which we appropriately called the "Little House." It was at the entrance to a big park and sometimes we would jokingly describe it as "Lazarus Lodge"—the poor man's house at the rich man's gate. It had little or no garden, but at Winchelsea that did not matter as the town stands on a hill overlooking the marshes and the sea, and we would never tire of sitting on the ramparts drinking in the sea air and the marvellous view. It was before there were many motors on the roads and it was quite unspoilt. Of recent years, cars screech up the hill and hoot through the street, disturbing the peace and calm and taking away much of its charm. Besides, there is a bad bungaloid growth that has spread all the way down from the hill to the shore. But in our time that trouble had not begun, and our two small boys could run wild in safety. July, 1914, was a lovely month and we were down at the cottage enjoying the fine weather and brilliant sunshine, unconscious of the troubles ahead. Perhaps it was because I was absorbed in my municipal work that I was not concerning myself in the larger world outside. But I do confess, when someone suggested to me that the troubles in Serbia

might involve us in war, I repudiated the idea as absurd. We had had so many years of European peace and Great Britain lived so securely behind her barrier of sea, that war was banished from most of our thoughts.

How wrong I was events were only too soon to prove. The fateful week-end that culminated in the First World War came as a horrible shock. I arrived in London on the Sunday and found crowds of people cheering at the gates of Buckingham Palace. Few of them had any conception of the horrors of war or of the nightmare that was in store for them. I felt I must do something, but I was not quite clear what. Finally, I let off steam by writing to *The Times*, and was amazed to find it featured prominently on the leader page. On Thursday, 6th August, 1914, I pointed out that "thousands of people desire to be of service to the State, but either because they belong to no territorial unit, or because of age and infirmities, they can be of no military value. These potential energies are wasting themselves in crowding round and cheering at the Palace and Government offices, embarrassing the police and in no way helping the defence of the country. For the first, that is the young and untrained men, I would suggest the forming in parties of evening camps on the lines of the Irish Nationalists and Ulster Volunteers," a proposition which I proceeded to elaborate in the letter. In subsequent days my letter-box was crammed with so many offers of help from all and sundry that I had to engage secretaries to deal with my correspondence. Many of the suggestions were fantastic, but all of them wanted to do something and they were looking for a lead. Many people contemplated an invasion, others anticipated food shortage, and civil commotion. My telephone was ringing all day, and two of my first direct contacts were with Stewart, then Public Trustee, Bonner, a Master of the High Court, and a personal friend, Graham Everett. The correspondence was growing so fast that I could not deal with it from my house, and we took over temporary offices in the Strand that had been used to organise a proposed national exhibition. We picked out the more responsible of my correspondents, such as the heads of big industries, managers of big stores and breweries, all of them names familiar to the public. At the first meeting we had offers to put up money for the promotion and training of a volunteer force which amounted in the aggregate to well over a million pounds sterling, always provided we could get official sanction. Of course, there was considerable discussion as to the machinery to be set up and the objects of the force. Some of the industrialists wanted the force to be available to defend their property in case of riots or in case of panic when the invader arrived. There was a lot of muddled thinking, but in 1914 the public had no experience

of the implications of war, and the Government was slow in issuing directions. My committee was not alone in taking action, though it was by far the strongest in personnel. The Government became alarmed at the prospect of raising private armies, and our activity was cut short by an edict forbidding them. In the meantime I had found an ideal man to act as president in Lord Desborough, and a military adviser in General Sir O'Moore Creagh, V.C.

Desborough was a popular personality, who knew everyone, had plenty of contacts and was well known to the general public. I suppose he was quite the greatest athlete of his day, had been a double blue for rowing and cricket, had swum Niagara, was a famous shot and an expert fencer. He had had experience in politics and had been a junior minister in a Liberal Government before he changed over to the Tories. He had the entry to the Court, which was not without advantage, but above all he was one of the few intimate personal friends of Lord Kitchener, who had become Secretary of State for War, and who had the final word in military matters. We could not have been better placed in our president. We were not altogether so happy in our choice of military advisers. O'Moore Creagh had just returned from being commander-in-chief in India, and had a long and distinguished military career behind him. But he had succeeded Kitchener in India, where he was known as "No More K," and neither of them had any use for the other. However, I got on with him very well. He was an Irishman with the keen sense of humour of his countrymen. He had little use for detail and did not like to put pen to paper. When he had to draft a military minute he would give me his idea and let me put it into shape, with the result that although I had no military training, I became quite expert in writing out orders in correct military language.

But I am going too fast. There was a complete hold-up in our new movement and it looked as if there was nothing for it but to dissolve our committee. However, I went to see Jack Tennant, who was Kitchener's Under Secretary of State, explained I had promises of ample funds and had collected together a powerful committee, and if I could get no official sanction it would all end in smoke. He was very sympathetic and understanding and gave me a note to show to my executive, "keep your committee together for future possible action." This satisfied the most important members of the committee, but those who were merely inspired by panic disappeared, and with them their money-bags. But we had not to wait long for recognition, though it was of a very limited character. On the fifth of September I received another note from Tennant, dated the War Office, 4th September, that there would be "no objection to your giving such lessons in drilling and musketry

at miniature ranges as you may think desirable to those men not of age for service in the ranks or otherwise disqualified for active service." This was a very negative authority and did not give us much scope, but as soon as it got about that we had even this limited sanction, letters came to me from all over the country asking to be associated with our organisation, so as to get legal status to train and learn to shoot. In the circumstances we decided not to run units ourselves, but to act as a co-ordinating organisation, to legalise units that would come within the narrow War Office ruling. This accounts for the original title of the Central Association of Volunteer Training Corps. The correspondence became so heavy that we had to look for permanent offices. Fortunately, Lord Haldane, who was then Lord Chancellor, became interested in our work, and he placed at our disposal the two temporary law courts that had been built in one of the courtyards of the Royal Courts of Justice. It was a curious environment for our administrative work, with jury-box and all the paraphernalia of a law court, but we managed to carry on there for over four years with few alterations. And those temporary courts still survive! For the next couple of months we were kept quite busy, but I doubt with our limited powers we could have justified our existence if events had not worked in our favour.

Kitchener was bending all his energies in the great task of building up his own new army. First it had to be recruited: that was not difficult because there was a rush of men to join, but it had to be housed, trained and equipped, and everything had to be improvised. With our Navy so strong, the experts did not think there was a real danger of large-scale invasion, but there was a risk of raids and it was not safe to leave the country unpatrolled. Kitchener did not want his new army to be wasting its time in guard work, when men were so badly wanted to fill up the gaps in French's gallant little army, and when it was so necessary to complete their training to stand up against the highly trained German army. Nor could he spare skilled officers, rifles or equipment. So in the light of his experience in South Africa he thought it would be a good idea to create a force of guerrillas on the lines of the Boer Commandos. But his hands were full and he did not want the War Office to assume responsibility for such irregulars. And so he bethought himself of our organisation and sent for Lord Desborough and asked him if we would be willing to assume responsibility. Kitchener had already thought the idea out and had even designed a red armlet with the magic letters "G.R.," the wearing of which was to be the authority to carry arms. The letter, dated War Office, 19th November, 1914, 20/Gen. No. 3604 (A.G.1), is of sufficient interest to quote in full, especially because of its

peculiar wording. It was addressed to Lord Desborough, as president:

"In confirmation of the arrangement made with you in various interviews, I am commanded to inform you that the Army Council are prepared to grant recognition to the Central Association Volunteer Training Corps as long as a responsible officer approved by the W.O. is its adviser and the Council will extend that recognition to such Volunteer Forces and Rifle Clubs, etc., as may be affiliated to your Association and decide to abide by your rules. The following rules have been framed as the condition under which the Army Council are prepared to grant recognition to your association and to those who may be affiliated thereto:—

- "(1) It is to be clearly understood that only the names of those can be registered who are not eligible through age to serve in the Regular or Territorial Army or are unable to do so for some genuine reason which is to be recorded in the Corps register; in the case of the latter, they must agree in writing to enlist if specially called upon to do so.
- "(2) No arms, ammunition or clothing will be supplied from public sources nor will financial assistance be given.
- "(3) There may be uniformity of dress among members of individual organisations provided that no badges of rank are worn, and provided that it is distinguishable from that of the Regular and Territorial Units.
- "(4) Members of recognised organisations will be allowed to wear a red armlet of a breadth of three inches with the letters G.R. inscribed thereon. The badge will be worn on the left arm above the elbow.
- "(5) The accepted military ranks and titles will not be used or recognised and no uniform is to be worn except where necessary for training.
- "(6) No form of attestation involving an oath is permitted.
- "(7) It will be open to any recruiting officers to visit the Corps at any time and to recruit any members found eligible for service with the Regular Army whose presence in the Corps is not accounted for by some good and sufficient reason."

The letter was signed on behalf of the Army Council by Sir Reginald Brade.

This letter which was mostly negative, one would have thought would have damped down enthusiasm. On the contrary, it was welcomed by units all over the country as an encouragement, so great was the enthusiasm among those anxious to be of service. It was estimated by the War Office that over a million men went through these Training Corps, in spite of these stringent conditions. The work of the Central Organisation became so important that

a letter was sent to Lord Desborough dated War Office, 7th April, 1915: "I am commanded to inform you that the Army Council consider it desirable for the sake of convenience to rest certain powers in the hands of a certain number of officials of the Association as an Executive Committee:

"Yourself,
General Sir O'Moore Creagh, V.C., G.C.B.,
C. J. Stewart,
Percy A. Harris.

"The function of this committee will be that of affiliating Volunteer Corps to the Central Association and of acting as a recognised channel of communication between the War Office and affiliated Volunteer Corps."

As hon. secretary, I had the administrative responsibility and it became for a year or two more or less a whole-time job. I had to improvise a staff, partly professional but largely voluntary, and I did collect a keen band of workers from all walks of life. We had a speakers' committee recruited from the political parties, whose main function was to visit towns and help to start units. But as a side-line it used to do recruiting for the Regular Army so long as it remained a voluntary one. This section held recruiting meetings round about the Law Courts with very great success. It worked in very close co-operation with the head recruiting office, and the department was treated as a branch office. Men in the "V.T.C.," as the force became to be known, used to come to our office in the Law Courts when, through their age group or other cause, they were called up, and the department was often able to get them a commission on the qualification of their experience in their units. Headquarters also ran an officers' training class in co-operation with Chelsea Barracks, and thousands went through it. Lord French visited these classes and when afterwards officers were given commissions, certificates given at them were recognised as proof of their efficiency. O'Moore Creagh formed a military committee and they had the difficult job of drawing up regulations to enforce the Army Council's instructions. First, the dress must be distinguishable from that of the Regular and Territorial units, and it was also conveyed to us that no woollen material was to be worn, and it was desirable to avoid the use of khaki. A wretched green-grey cotton cloth was finally made the official material and elderly gentlemen were to be seen all over the country shivering in this apology for a uniform, but it was generally accepted and put up with. But the chief headache was to get round the regulation that no badges of rank were to be worn and that the accepted "military ranks and titles will not be used or recognised."

The word "Commandant," was devised and a special series of

badges of rank were invented, easily distinguishable from that worn in the Regular Army and not unlike those since used in the Air Force. A book of regulations was published by the Central Association, giving the design of uniform badges of rank and every detail.

In the first year or two great use of the force was made for all sorts of purposes, in fact anything requiring an organised body of men. The London Fire Brigade found itself short of men and an arrangement was made for London units, wearing our official uniform, to act as a supplementary force in case of emergency, and they attended and helped to put out many fires. It was decided to strengthen London defences, and instead of sending down Regulars, units of the V.T.C. went down at week-ends to dig trenches, and very well they did this work. There was an Artists' Unit and many distinguished Royal Academicians and architects would be seen on a Sunday in their green-grey cotton uniforms, hard at work with a pick and shovel on the outskirts of London.

The Army Ordnance had a big depot at Didcot that had become very congested. The Army could not find the man-power to load the goods into trucks. For several months organised units of the V.T.C. could be seen shifting heavy weights as if their very lives depended on it. I quote these as examples only. Another very different phase of their work was to provide organised men wearing G.R. armlets to meet leave trains at Victoria or Charing Cross and give the men help and advice. A very popular service it turned out to be.

We had our critics and scoffers. It was a common thing to describe the Force as the "Gorgeous Wrecks." In the early days an attempt was made to administer the force from our offices in the Law Courts. O'Moore Creagh organised an inspectorate whose duty it was to visit units and report on their organisation and efficiency. All officer commissions had to be signed at headquarters. This meant over-centralisation and congestion. It was therefore decided to work through the machinery of the counties and we asked their Lord-Lieutenants to act as presidents and become responsible for giving commissions to the officers in their local units. They were only too willing to undertake it, accepting direction from the Central Association and its officers. I had become Deputy Chairman of the L.C.C. and I obtained the use of the County Hall, then at Spring Gardens, for quarterly conferences, which were attended by the Lord-Lieutenants and their County Commandants, with Lord Desborough in the chair, supported by Sir O'Moore Creagh and myself.

This new alignment brought me in contact with most of the Lord-Lieutenants. I found those who were of ancient lineage easiest to deal with, while more recent creations were more inclined

to stand on their dignity and be sticky about their rights. The man who was born a duke and could trace his pedigree back for generations was more sure of himself than the peer who was the first of his line. But, on the whole, the Lord-Lieutenants co-operated well with the Central Association and carried out its decrees loyally as if they came from the Army Council. Actually, our sole authority was the letter quoted above, though the War Office did back us up and we had no serious difficulty with them. When differences did arise Desborough, O'Moore Creagh and myself went round and saw the appropriate officer, and on the whole the department was most helpful. Of course, there was a lot of discontent. In the early days, as in the last war, it was mainly the absence of rifles and ammunition. Most of the units learned their drills with dummies or broomsticks. However, there was great joy when we received a shipment of Winchesters from America. Two people I was brought into contact with through the movement caused me considerable amusement. They were Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells. One day I had them both to lunch at the Reform Club, where we had a serious discussion on National Defence. Two men could not have been more different. Doyle, big, hearty, slow of speech, Wells, small, quick, sharp and bubbling over with ideas. Conan Doyle claimed to have been the first to organise and drill a volunteer unit and was rather offended that I had not recognised this priority. "H.G." was living somewhere in Essex, which he regarded as the likely spot for the landing of a German raiding party, and he much regretted they had no weapons of defence to safeguard their hearths and homes. He had designed, or found, a hog spear, which he claimed would be better than nothing, and he actually sent me a sample of this peculiar weapon which I assume was used for killing pigs. The Germans were no doubt pigs, but I don't think this weapon would have been any more use against them than Croft's pikes!

Good and useful work as the V.T.C. were doing, headquarters were constantly getting complaints that members were becoming tired of drilling and doing odd jobs; they wanted to be employed on more serious work. General Officers in Command of Districts, when they saw these green-grey veterans drilling, began to take an interest in them, but it was doubtful how far they could be used in serious military duties without infringing the law. We could not persuade the Government to take action, so the Central Association decided to try and legalise the position themselves. They therefore promoted a Bill, which Lord Lincolnshire introduced on their behalf in the House of Lords on 26th October, 1915. Clause one was, "It shall be lawful for His Majesty to accept for purposes in connection with the present war, the services of any Volunteer

Corps, being a corps which is duly affiliated to the Central Association Volunteer Training Corps as recognised and approved by the Army Council, and whose services are offered through that association." The Bill received a surprisingly favourable reception, was blessed by Lord Lansdowne, the leader of the Upper House, as well as by Lord Newton speaking for the War Office. It got its third reading without a division but failed to reach the House of Commons before the end of the session. But it was some achievement for the Central Association to have got so far with a private member's Bill, on what was really an important defence problem. The Government could not ignore this clear expression of opinion, and decided in the next session to face up to the issue.

The Volunteer Act of 1863, under which the old Volunteers had functioned right through Victorian years, had not been repealed by the Haldane Act creating the Territorials, and the Government decided to revive its provisions, with modifications to be made by regulations promulgated by the Army Council. The original Act, in section 17, limited the liability for service to the "case of imminent danger," while under the regulation the liability was more closely defined as being "only if and when it becomes necessary for the purpose of repelling an enemy in the event of an invasion being imminent."

The revival of this Act revolutionised the status of the force. Instead of being regarded more or less as a joke, and to be little more than tolerated, the whole position was completely changed and they were soon to become an integral part of the armed forces of the Crown. There is a good deal more to be told about the part played by the Volunteer in the prosecution of war. But I am justified in pausing here for a few comments before I conclude my tale.

The greatest contribution I made to the work was in the early days when, with little official support and a lot of obstruction, I had managed to keep alive the movement. I put in a tremendous amount of time and energy with a team of loyal colleagues to create what really was a force of irregulars. I knew nothing of military matters, no one was more sublimely ignorant of them than I was, but somehow or other I managed to build up machinery that worked. I made thousands of friends up and down the country, of all classes. There was hardly a town or village that had not its unit, and there was actually more general enthusiasm in the days when the force was frowned on and viewed with cold official disfavour, than when it was finally taken over and favours showered on it. Actually for the first two years the force received not a penny of public money, and uniforms were paid for by the men themselves, assisted by local subscriptions.

Curiously enough, the time of recognition synchronised with my first entry into Parliament, but that is another story which I must relate elsewhere.

After the application of the old Volunteer Act gave proper recognition to the Volunteers, the military authorities began to realise that here, ready at hand and organised without their aid, was a force which was going to add considerably to their man-power. Some of us had been telling them this for some time, but we had been preaching to deaf ears. The war in France was eating up human life at a great rate and men could not be found and trained quickly enough to satisfy the appetites of the military. It had become necessary to abandon our traditional adherence to the voluntary system, and adopt conscription. There was one weakness of the old Volunteer Act which was that men could not be compelled to stay in the force longer than they wished, or to attend a definite number of drills. It was therefore necessary to pass a short amending Bill, which was introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Derby and quickly passed through all its stages and which became law in December, 1916. This provided for the men to sign an agreement to stay in the force until the end of the war, making them liable to come under the Army Act should they fail to fulfil their obligations. One of the results of the new dispensation was to transfer the responsibility for the force from my organisation to the War Office, and with it came the resignation of my friend O'Moore Creagh who, in his own way, had given devoted service to the original movement.

The Central Association changed its title to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments and continued to exist, but only for propaganda purposes and for the ventilation of problems arising out of county administration.

Desborough was given the position of Honorary Deputy Director of Volunteers, under the Director General of the Territorials, while I was made an Hon. Assistant Director, and used to attend a weekly conference at the War Office. Now, instead of the force being starved, every requirement was met. The men were given proper equipment, rifles, woollen khaki, the officers were given His Majesty's Commission, they were allowed to wear the ordinary badges of rank, and, what perhaps was most helpful, each unit was given a paid adjutant and instructor.

But in spite of all these favours it lost the popularity of early days. There were many reasons for this. The old voluntary spirit had gone out of it, and this was accentuated by the fact that tribunals that gave exemption from service in the Army, now often made it conditional upon joining a volunteer unit. Many of these men

came to parade reluctantly and rather resented compulsion. The introduction of this element rather spoilt the old *esprit de corps*. The idea was not unsound, but it rather broke the spell of the voluntary character that originally inspired the force.

However, there came a day when the Volunteers proved invaluable. I was called to attend a special War Office conference to discuss how far it would be possible to mobilise the force for Home Defence should the emergency arise. After the defeat of Gough's Army in March, 1918, it became necessary to send every man and youth overseas to fill the gaps, and denude the country of reserves. Was it safe to leave the country without any Home Army and rely entirely on the Volunteer Force? Would the men in the force take objection, if the necessity arose, to being embodied? I was able to reassure the authorities. The Army Council decided to take the risk and all reserves were quickly dispatched overseas.

I think I can say, therefore, that the Volunteer Force did play a considerable part in bringing about final victory. If it had not existed those vital reserves could not have been sent when they were so urgently required. It is worth recalling that at the time of the Armistice there were 137,800 ordinary Volunteers, and 97,000 men sent into the force by the tribunals, making a total of 234,800. In a report issued by the Central Association, for which I was responsible, were these pregnant words: "The Volunteer Force is now disbanded. Five years of patient work to be scrapped and little trace will be left of the devoted and unpaid service, often of thousands of men, many of whom are well past the age when the State could legitimately have a call on their time. Some would have liked to have seen the movement perpetuated as a National Reserve, but this is not to be. In the Napoleonic Wars a similar force came into being. It numbered as many as 380,000, which out of the then population was a large percentage. In 1808 it was mainly absorbed in the local militia, but in 1812 there were still some 70,000 in the Volunteers when, under the provisions of an old Act of George III, 119,000 enrolled. In 1863 the Volunteer Act was passed. In 1871 the force was taken out of the hands of the Lord-Lieutenants and put under the War Office. In 1900, during the South African War, the conditions of their service were modified, while Lord Haldane's legislation swept them away to make room for the Territorials. The revival and development of the force has been traced in these pages; it is again to disappear and it may be hoped that the need to revive them again may not occur. But it seems unfortunate that in the new military order some corner has not been found for a force so essentially British and so popular with the people as the Volunteers."

When I expressed the hope that the need to revive the Volunteers

would not occur I had little idea that, in my own life-time, I would so soon see history repeat itself.

When the need for rearmament became urgent, I approached Duff Cooper, then Secretary of State for War, gave him a copy of the report, "The Volunteer Force, 1914-1919," and suggested that it would be opportune, in the light of the dangers ahead, to prepare plans for a force on similar lines. He kept the report for a considerable time and then turned down the idea. When the war did break out in 1939 I spoke to Hore-Belisha, told him of my experiences in the previous war, and again suggested that a move might well be made once again to create a Volunteer Force on the lines of our movement. But he scouted the need for it, explained the conditions in the new war were very different from those in the previous war, and that it would be a complete waste of time and money to do anything of the sort.

How wrong he was events were to prove. After Dunkirk, Winston Churchill again had to set to work to create a Volunteer Force under the title of the Home Guard. I offered my services and I believed I could have saved the force a lot of teething trouble. But my offer was not accepted and I did not press the matter because I felt I did not really want again to go through the same old troubles of which I had had enough between 1914 and 1918.

Once more the force has been scrapped. May I repeat the prayer that it will not be needed again.

In due course a letter was received from the War Office, dated 12th November, 1919, addressed to Lord Desborough, as President of the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments.

"I am commanded by the Army Council to state that as there is no likelihood of the further need of the services as a military body, that the Volunteer Force, which was raised during the war under the Volunteer Acts, 1863-1916, should be disbanded, and effect has now been given to the decision. In notifying this fact the Council desire to take the opportunity of referring to the good services which have been rendered by the Central Association during the war, both before and after the War Office took over the administration of the Volunteer Force. The Volunteer Training Corps Organisation, consolidated as they were by the efforts of your Association in the early period of the war, proved to be a very useful training ground for large numbers of men who were afterwards called upon to serve in His Majesty's Forces, and it was generally found that the training they had received in the Volunteer Training Corps proved of service to them on joining the Army, in many cases enabling the training period to be much reduced, a factor of considerable importance, when, as on occasions, the services of every available man were required at short notice.

"Since the early part of 1916, when the Volunteer Force actually formed part of the military forces of the Crown, valuable assistance has been rendered by your Association in various matters in connection with the force and more recently in connection with the Territorial Cadet Force. I am accordingly desired by the Army Council to convey their thanks to yourself as President, to Mr. Percy A. Harris, as Honorary Secretary, and generally to your Association for the work which has been so willingly rendered.

"Signed, T. A. CORGORAN."

And so finished an interesting phase in my life. When occasionally I ventured to intervene in military discussion, members of the House glared at me disapprovingly, feeling that I had no claim to know anything about such matters. Perhaps they were right, but I did have over four years' experience in the organisation of the Volunteer Force, which did bring me into contact with the military mind.

I was in and out of the War Office and met most of the leading soldiers and got to know their virtues and defects. And in another capacity I was still further to widen my knowledge. Finally, I never regretted the time I put into this work. It often taxed my patience to the extreme, and at times I became disheartened by the constant opposition with which I was faced. But it gave me a wider outlook on affairs than I could have achieved if all my energies had been concentrated on local government. Besides, I had the satisfaction of feeling I was making some small contribution towards the successful conclusion of the war.

CHAPTER VI

IN PARLIAMENT, 1916 TO 1918

THOUGH the events I am now to relate synchronised in time with those told in the last chapter, they opened a new epoch in my public life.

Some time before the war, the Whips sent for me and told me that the member for Market Harborough desired to retire at the General Election, that the Liberals were looking for a suitable candidate, that my name had been mentioned and they would like to interview me.

I had no association with Leicestershire, of which this division was a part. It was well-known hunting country and this district had more than one pack of hounds located in it, and I had no qualification in that direction. But a great part of industrial

Leicester was in it, and scattered about the division were a number of hosiery factories and industrial patches. There it was, and if I still had ambition to enter Parliament, here was a chance. The Liberal member for the division, Mr. Logan, was a curious mixture. He was a successful contractor, had made a lot of money, had a fine house in the constituency and rode to hounds. He had advanced views in politics, favoured the nationalisation of the land, and had leanings towards Labour. He made no attempt to conceal his views, and forcibly expressed them. On the occasion when there was a scene in the House, and members resorted to fisticuffs, Logan was reputed to have played a leading part and struck the first blow. He took very much his own line on almost every problem and could by no means be regarded as an ordinary party man. However, I, apparently, got his blessing, on my political record, as a suitable successor. His health was none too good and he had retired once before to make way for R. C. Lehmann, who was a neighbour of my father-in-law at Bourne End, and a friend of mine. I decided to consult him before coming to a decision.

Rudy Lehmann, as his friends called him, was a popular figure in his time, but a generation has grown up which is not familiar with his name and for their benefit it is worth recalling.

Rudy Lehmann was the finest rowing coach of his day, if not of all time. He hadn't won his blue, but no one was more skilful in imparting the art of swinging correctly in unison, getting the crew's hands away properly and making them use their legs. In other words, he was a great coach and had been over to the U.S.A. to coach Harvard. But he was no mere athlete. He was a regular contributor to *Punch*, and could turn out a verse or write a delightful article according to the highest traditions of that journal. In addition he was a keen politician, and for a time had been editor of the old *Daily News*. Unfortunately, his health had broken down and he had had to give up the House of Commons.

When I discussed the matter with him he strongly recommended me to accept the invitation from Harborough should it come my way. In due course I went down to Leicester and addressed the Liberal Association at their headquarters there, and was adopted as prospective candidate. But I had no opportunity to make myself known to the electors. The war intervened and with it came the political truce that brought party politics to an end. However, Logan found his health would not permit him to carry on and he suddenly threw in his hand and informed the Whips he was going to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and resign his seat. This did not come at a happy time for the Government. The war was not going too well, casualties were heavy and the armies were stuck in the mud of Flanders. In the Northcliffe Press

particularly, there was a lot of criticism of the Government, though it was a National one, and there was considerable agitation in some quarters in favour of conscription. All this discontent crystallised in a by-election, when Pemberton Billing stood as an Independent with the backing of the *Daily Mail*. To the amazement of everyone, he won the seat.

As soon as it became public that another by-election was probable, Northcliffe decided to make a second attempt to wrest a seat from the Government, and they were lucky in the man who was ready to stand and fight the division. Thomas Gibson Bowles had been a popular figure in his time. His name and his face had become familiar through cartoons in *Punch* for many years, and he had his own ideas on many subjects. It can be said his hand was against every man and he was known to be a doughty fighter. If an unknown man like Pemberton Billing could win a seat, Tommy Bowles should have a walk-over. However, Northcliffe was going to leave nothing to chance, and threw into the fray the whole force of the Press he controlled. The hoardings were covered with *Daily Mail* posters, "Buy *Daily Mail* and vote for Bowles," and a special edition of the *Daily Mirror*, then in Northcliffe's hands, was published and distributed free to the electors. To outsiders it did not appear that I had a ghost of a chance, and the seat looked as good as lost to the Government before ever the fight started. But I was young and energetic and kept to the front the query: "Were the electors to select their own M.P. or have one dictated to them by the Yellow Press?" and a very effective question it was.

The party truce was on and I was supposed to have the official support of all three parties, and so far as London headquarters were concerned the party caucus played the game and I had no complaint. But many local Tories did not relish the idea of swallowing a Liberal, especially when they had the chance to vote for such a breezy personality as Tommy Bowles. Things did not look too well at one time, but one incident, a very small one, helped to turn things in my favour.

I was advised to go and speak on market day at a small country town which was regarded as a Tory stronghold. When I mounted the small platform in the middle of the market the farmers deliberately turned their backs on me, resenting my daring to speak to them on their own cabbage patch. I had with me a Liberal M.P., Colonel Ainsworth. Anyone less like the familiar idea of a Liberal M.P. could not be conceived. He was good-looking, wore a monocle, was immaculately dressed in a smart overcoat with astrakhan collar, and wore spats. He had a slight stammer and was by no means a fluent speaker. He opened hesitatingly, "This is a great

national crisis and it is important, therefore, to support the Government. All parties are supporting Percy Harris. Tories have been to speak for Percy Harris, Labour has been down to speak for him and so have Liberals. But I will be quite frank with you. I am a b-b-bloody Radical." The news spread throughout the division. I was all right, I was not a prig and Tory farmers could swallow their pride and vote for the "bloody Radical." I won the election and had a majority of over 4,000, which was very flattering to my conceit. Yet, when I look back over a period of years on the results of the many elections of one kind or another that I have fought, I realise what a gamble they are and how many factors combine to bring about results. No doubt the personality of a candidate is important, but it is so often outweighed by events and circumstances quite outside his control. Thomas Gibson Bowles was quite the most distinguished man I ever had up against me: he had a fine public record and was a good and fluent speaker and had behind him a powerful Press campaign. Less than three years afterwards I was opposed by a complete nonentity, who could not speak and who frankly admitted he knew nothing of politics, yet he beat me by about the same margin I had won by. In 1916 I was a complete stranger, but in the intervening years I had, by general consent, been a good member and had done some useful work in the House of Commons. With the electorate, however, all this counted for nothing: the swing was against me and out I went. Perhaps it is that I am not a good weathercock and do not bend with every passing breeze. I do believe in democracy, but one cannot deny its actions at times are a little wayward and hard to understand, and on occasions our faith in its wisdom is severely tested. But to return to my story.

For the uninitiated I should explain that a member returned at a by-election has to get two sponsors to introduce him to the House. Recently, a Scottish Nationalist questioned the validity of this tradition, and insisted on walking down the floor of the House on his own. The Speaker, however, quoted ancient rules of the House and would not accept this informal way of taking his seat. Eventually the Scotsman thought better of it, succumbed to the rules and was properly introduced.

My entry did have an element of drama in it. Curiously enough my sponsors were both Scots, John Gulland, who was the Chief Whip, and my friend, Eugene Wason. The introduction takes place after Questions and, when the hours of the House are normal, at somewhere about 3.45 p.m. The two sponsors and the member stand at the Bar of the House, i.e., a line marked by a certain strip on the floor, the actual brass bar not being used. This line marks the House proper and indicates that part of the Chamber in which

members can take an active part in the proceedings. If a member is outside the line he is technically outside the House, and cannot take part or intervene in its business. Facing the Speaker in the old, but now destroyed building, was the public gallery. Incidentally, the new House now in process of being built will very much conform to the old design. At the conclusion of Questions, Mr. Speaker says, "Members desirous of taking their place please come forward." And the new member and his two sponsors march forward in unison and in step, a ceremony usually rehearsed beforehand, as it is always watched with a critical eye by old members, who like to see the thing done well. In my case, hardly had the Speaker asked us to come forward and the three of us had started our walk along the floor of the House, when members shouted at us, "Look out!" A man in the public gallery had swung himself over the rail and dropped down on to the floor, a risky feat that might have broken his legs. He just missed my head by a few inches and had I not advanced at that moment he would have landed on my head. Of course, this caused considerable sensation. The assumption was that the man in question had some personal grievance against me, but it turned out that he had just returned from the Front, where there was a shortage of steel helmets, and this was his way of ventilating a very genuine grievance. He eventually wrote to me and apologised for any inconvenience he had caused me.

When I took my seat as Member for Harborough it was March, 1916. Ministers were only too glad to see me, as they had quite made up their minds the seat was going to be lost, instead of which I appeared with a 4,000 majority.

Mr. Asquith was still Prime Minister and head of an apparently impregnable Coalition, with no serious opposition. Kitchener was still Secretary of State for War, McKenna was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Grey was Foreign Secretary, Samuel was Home Secretary, Runciman was at the Board of Trade and last, but not least, Lloyd George was Minister of Munitions (he was to become Secretary of State for War a little later). The only serious critics were Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, but they did not cut much ice, and by no means had a united Labour Party behind them. Winston Churchill was not in the Government. He had been elbowed out by the Tories at the time of the Coalition, and only put in an occasional appearance.

There are only three survivors of the Government which was in office when I first entered the House of Commons, and all three are in the House of Lords. Samuel leads the Liberals, in the House of Lords, but Runciman, unfortunately through illness, has ceased

to be active in public life. Cecil, who was Minister of Blockade, is, I am glad to say, still taking an active part in affairs.

I think I am correct in saying that there are only two members in the House of Commons elected in 1945 who were colleagues of mine in 1916, Lord Winterton and Winston Churchill.

As far as I was concerned I was more than fully occupied. Not only was I helping to administer the Volunteer Force, I was still on the London County Council, was shortly to become a member of the National Expenditure Committee, and I regularly attended the House of Commons and took part in the proceedings. There were three private members that stand out clearly in my memory. Pringle, Hogg and Walter Roche. The last named was a skilled debater with a pungent wit, and everyone felt he had a distinguished political career before him, but he tired of the game and in 1918 he did not stand again. For years he was a well-known figure at the Reform Club and was content to exercise his gift of repartee on the habitués of the smoking-room. He loved to cross swords with Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells, with whom he could more than hold his own. But at the time of which I am thinking he would sit on the back bench on the Government side with Pringle and Hogg, enjoying their digs at Ministers, egging them on, and sometimes taking a hand himself. Pringle and Hogg were unique: there have never been their like since, and I doubt if there ever will be. The parliamentary game goes on but its technique has changed! Pringle knew the standing orders backwards, and delighted in tripping up Ministers and even challenging the Chair. Hogg was heavier of hand and not quite so skilful, but he worked closely with Pringle and was always prepared to back him up and second any amendment that appeared out of the fertile mind of his colleague. Two other back benchers I recollect in those days, Sir H. Dalziel and Sir Charles Henry. Dalziel was a wealthy man and a successful journalist who was a great power behind the scenes. He did not often speak, he was not much of an orator, but when he did intervene you could be quite sure that trouble was brewing. Sir Charles Henry was of quite another kidney. He also was a wealthy man, with American connections, and had the reputation of being in Lloyd George's confidence, and when he and Dalziel were seen conferring together, one could be certain something was going to happen.

My sympathies as a Radical and a keen social reformer were naturally more with L.G. rather than with the more orthodox and conventional Asquith. But I got sick and tired of the intrigue, and when the break-up did come, my sense of decency made me lean to the Asquith side.

I remember a conversation I had one Saturday with Walter

Long, then President of the Local Government Board. It was about the Volunteer Force and the proposal to give tribunals power to make exemptions from military service conditional on joining a unit. I was to have seen him in the morning, but my appointment was postponed until the afternoon. Our official business did not take long, and when we had finished he rose from the table and, standing with his back to the mantelpiece, said, "I must apologise for putting you off, but you know we had a special Cabinet Meeting this morning about conscription. I have been a conscriptionist all my life, but up to the present we have had, through the voluntary system, all the men we could equip." Long was a typical Tory squire and had a downright way of speaking. He proceeded to emphasise his remarks by glaring fiercely at me. "There has been intrigue against the Prime Minister (i.e., Mr. Asquith): I have told him he's too honest for them. Believe me, it's not the Tories: we are as loyal to him as if he were Lord Salisbury." He paused, and then said, "Judas! that is what I call it!" This conversation stamped itself on my mind, and I could only make my own inference from it.

The justification for the break-up of Asquith's first Coalition, and the substitution of Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister, will always be a matter of controversy. Looking back on events and seeing them in perspective, the best case that can be made out for it is that the war was not going too well, casualties were heavy, and something was badly required that would strike the popular imagination.

Asquith was a big man, with a fine mind and balanced judgment, but he was shy and reserved and had never made any attempt to ingratiate himself with the public. The nation respected him, but he stirred no emotions.

On the other hand, Lloyd George had all the arts of the demagogue, and knew how to fire the popular imagination. He was unconventional and was always ready to break with tradition and try new methods. The two men had worked together well, and liked each other. Asquith was nothing if not tolerant and would overlook his colleague's foibles, whereas L.G. believed in his own star, was ambitious, and would not hesitate to do anything to get his own way. There was, too, the sinister figure of Beaverbrook, who was always ready to act Lady Macbeth to L.G.'s desire for power. I do think Asquith was treated badly, but when the political game is being played, loyalties seem to count for little. The curious thing is, the Tories had more in common with Asquith than with L.G., and one would have thought they would not have lent themselves to Asquith's destruction. Bonar Law, as leader of their party, had much to do with the change. My own impression is the Tories were, as far as persons were concerned, quite detached

and prepared to use either of these figures to achieve their ends. I am quite ready to believe that they were inspired by patriotic motives, but the fact remains that if they could part these two outstanding figures they would inevitably split the Liberal Party and help forward the Conservative cause. And this is exactly what happened. Liberalism never recovered from the inevitable bitterness that followed this reorientation. Most of the Liberal leaders were left out of the new Coalition, which was predominantly Conservative in its composition. There was no love lost between most of the former Liberal Ministers and L.G. They had no use for each other. Many of them L.G. did not like, while they heartily reciprocated his feelings. The blame was by no means all on one side. There was a certain intellectual snobbery that made some of his colleagues contemptuous of the little Welshman, bubbling over with ideas, which he did not always work out to their logical conclusions. But no one could rob him of that touch of genius that on occasion told him the way out of difficulties that were almost insuperable.

The tragedy of it all, looking back on the incidents of which I was a close spectator, is that one man was the natural complement of the other. Asquith, cool, calm, with analytical mind, L.G., imaginative, forceful and dynamic. If only they had stuck together, Liberalism after the war would have been the decisive force both in Europe and at home, and we might have built a very different world to that which eventually led to the war of 1939. L.G.'s instincts told him what was right to do both in peace and in reconstruction, but there were forces around him that pushed him in the other direction. Asquith's sound judgment would have supplied the balance he so badly needed. It is not unreasonable to assume we might have had a Liberal House of Commons instead of the reactionary crowd that dominated the scene between 1918 and 1922. It is no use crying over spilt milk, but I cannot but lament these personalities that did so much to destroy a great party.

The rift was widened by the wretched Maurice debate which left a bitter taste behind it on both sides of the dispute.

On 7th May, 1918, a letter appeared in the Press over the signature of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, until recently Director of Military Operations, and a distinguished soldier: it challenged the accuracy of statements made in the House of Commons by Bonar Law as Leader of the House on behalf of the Government, as to what happened at the Versailles War Council, and as to the strength of forces employed on different fronts. In his letter he said the statements made "are known to a large number of soldiers to be incorrect, and this knowledge is breeding such distrust of the Government as can only end in impairing the splendid morale of the troops at a time when everything should be done to raise it.

I have therefore decided, fully realising the consequences to myself, that my duty as a soldier must not override my duty as a citizen, and I ask you to publish this letter in the hope that Parliament may see fit to order an investigation into the statements I have made."

The story has often been told, and I am certainly not going to revive the old controversy. But it is clear that Parliament could not ignore such serious allegations, in fact members would have been lacking in their duties had the matter not been raised. The obvious man to do it was Mr. Asquith, an ex-Prime Minister and the most commanding figure in the House. The Government offered to appoint two Judges, and looking back I think Asquith and his friends would have been wise to have accepted it. But it could well be argued that allegations against the veracity of Ministers was a matter for the House of Commons itself, and on 9th May a debate took place on a motion, moved by Asquith himself, asking for the appointment of a Select Committee.

As was to be expected, his speech was moderate and no exception could be taken to either its tone or contents. But L.G., who was not going to let his old Liberal friends get off lightly, immediately interpreted the motion as a vote of censure, in spite of Asquith's disclaimer. In a bitter fighting speech he went for his critics baldheaded. "Why," he said, "I have been for the last two or three years, since I have thrown myself into the vigorous prosecution of the war, according to my view, drenched with cocoa slops," referring to the old *Daily News*, which had been most open in its criticism. He then proceeded with vigour to defend his whole conduct of the war, as well as the figures used by Bonar Law. He ended by saying, "I really beg and implore for our common country, the fate of which is in the balance now and in the next few weeks, that there should be an end of this sniping," and I must say when he resumed his seat I felt he had made his case. When he finished there was a pause. It had been arranged that Runciman was to follow, but he made no move and it was left to Pringle, who had originally raised the issue, to cut in, and it could be certain he would not pour oil on the troubled waters.

Runciman was one of the clearest and most effective speakers I have heard. His arguments were always well marshalled and he handled figures as if he understood them, and always carried conviction. I never knew why he didn't get up. Whether he thought L.G. was unanswerable or whether he did not like to face a hostile House I don't know. Old Sir Walter Runciman, his father, was then in the House with him. He was a very different character, breezy, redolent of the sea on which he had spent most of his early days, full of anecdotes and fun, and with very little provocation ready to sing a sea chanty. The old man, stout and full-blooded,

looked like a sea captain, while his son was white-faced, thin and might well be mistaken for a Nonconformist minister. Asquith is supposed to have said, "On the whole, I prefer the old sea pirate to the alabaster statesman."

Whatever the merits of the charges, the critics did not put up a very good show in the debate. Carson and others tried to persuade them not to press the motion to a division, and I certainly did not feel inclined to vote. But Geoffrey Howard, who was one of Asquith's Whips, asked me to stand by the old man who, he assured me, had a much stronger case than he had made public, pointing out that most of his friends were deserting him, and at the last moment I acquiesced and went reluctantly into the Lobby. I made the mistake of being influenced by a sense of loyalty, a mistake that cost me my seat because the Maurice Vote was made a test case. On such comparative small things the fate of Members of Parliament are decided.

Looking back, I cannot but think that the Maurice issue might well have been settled behind the Speaker's chair. But I am convinced that a bitterness had been engendered between L.G. and his Liberal colleagues that warped their judgment. I suppose it was natural that men who have worked together in the same government and on the same side should resent one of their number remaining in the highest position while they were left out in the cold.

As far as I was concerned I never quarrelled with L.G. I was conscious of his faults, which were obvious, but it is impossible to deprive him of those great gifts which were an asset to the nation—imagination and drive.

As in the recent war Parliament, the Parliament of the previous war spent the latter part of its life in passing measures dealing with electoral reform and education. Electoral reform in the House I am now writing about made far more revolutionary changes than the comparatively modest Act passed in 1944. It, for the first time, enfranchised women, it abolished plural voting and made several other changes.

The Education Act was piloted through Parliament by the distinguished historian and scholar, Herbert Fisher, and if only its powers had been put into operation, another Act would not have been necessary. I can only hope a better fate awaits the Butler Act. In all the work of the House I took an active part, practising the art of asking questions, moving amendments to Bills, and entering with zest into the life of the place.

I was then living at the top of Hampstead Heath, and I remember one night, after the Tube had stopped running and no taxis being available, walking home with Ramsay MacDonald and R. C. Lambert. Ramsay was a charming companion, and loved to talk

literature. Little did I think, as we trudged along together, he was to be three times Prime Minister, once at the head of an all-party National Government. R. C., or Dick Lambert, was an old friend of mine. I knew him long before I got into the House. When I first knew him he was an ardent Liberal Imperialist. He claimed descent from General Lambert of Cromwell's time, had inherited through his family some fine old masters and antique furniture and china, and was a considerable Egyptologist and had an interesting collection he had himself made on his travels. But somehow or other he had got mixed up with the pacifists and was a member of the Union of Democratic Control, though by temperament and character he would have been more at home in the opposite camp. He did not stand again, but later became the popular librarian of the Athenæum Club.

Perhaps the most interesting work I did in that Parliament was as member of the Select Committee on National Expenditure.

As in all wars, the waste was tremendous. I am not sure it is not inevitable. Even with the most careful provision in advance, the pressure from the Service departments for new equipment and weapons goes on from day to day, and there is always the plea of urgency and the threat that delay will mean loss of lives. Expansion from peace to wartime footing goes on so quickly that it is impossible to improvise proper financial checks.

Godfrey Collins had constantly pressed for the appointment of a special committee, and in 1917 the Select Committee on National Expenditure was appointed, with Herbert Samuel as chairman and myself among its members.

This was the beginning of my association with Samuel, which has continued in various capacities ever since.

There is no public man for whom I have more respect and affection. He has a clear and logical mind, with a great sense of public duty. If I must criticise, I would say he is almost too perfect: he hardly ever makes a mistake, and if he makes a statement you can be sure it has been carefully checked and double checked.

He has always kept himself well under control, and I have never seen him give play to his emotions. Actually he is a man of deep convictions. Perhaps it is that Balliol training of his. It is a fault so many Balliol men suffer from, especially the vintage to which Samuel belonged. They were too well trained and almost seem to know too much to belong to the common clay, and outsiders get an inferiority complex when brought into contact with them.

But needless to say, Samuel made a model chairman. I was appointed a member of the War Office Sub-Committee over which he presided and we put in a lot of hard work and dug out a lot of waste. Some of our discoveries are quite worth recording.

A friend of mine, Sir Maurice FitzMaurice, an engineer, intimated to me that if I were looking for scandals I should inquire into Loch Doon. So we did.

The Air Force was then under the Army and, compared with these days, was a very primitive affair. Some person at the War Office had rightly insisted that men should have experience of bombing before they went overseas. Some bright person at the War Office—we could never discover who—recommended that Loch Doon, in Ayrshire, should be the place. The idea was that a man should get into the train and go without changing right up to the loch, so that no time should be wasted. A special branch line was planned and the necessary land had been bought for the purpose. A switchback railway, something like the one they used to have at Earl's Court, was designed and built alongside the loch, and the plane was to practise bombing targets on it. An emergency landing ground was provided for, on one side of the loch, and work had been started on it and a lot of preliminary work done. But the site must have been selected from a map, because the land was a notorious bog and would require a fortune to be spent on it for drainage. One plane did land there but it was unable to get off again, being completely stuck in the mud. Fortunately, we intervened in time and stopped further expenditure. Actually, owing to the increased speed of planes, the switchback railway was already out of date before it was finished. This is just one of many examples of wildcat schemes.

But the most interesting part of our work was interviewing the Generals, whose personalities seem to have loomed larger in that particular war, than in the last one. Sir William Robertson made a great impression on me. He was very downright, never wasted words, and said exactly what he thought. He soon made it very clear he had no use for side-shows. But one incident is worth mentioning because I hear it caused considerable amusement among the military hierarchy, as being typical of a question from a civilian. At the time there was a serious shortage of essential materials for the production of munitions, but the consumption was increasing at a rate quite out of proportion to the increase in manpower. I asked, "Did the number of men killed increase with the additional number of rounds being fired?" The reply was in the negative. I then asked whether the French fired as many rounds per man and per mile held, and the answer was, No! Did our men kill more men as the result of the additional rounds of munitions fired, compared with the number killed by the French? The answer was, No! I then asked the pertinent question, "In the light of the shortage of materials could we not reduce our expenditure to the level of the French?" The reply I received was illuminating,

"No, the French hate the Bosche: they can cease firing for hours and even days and they will show the same zest to kill. But the British soldier is different: he is a bad hater and if he ceases firing he will lose interest and his fighting spirit will fade away. We must keep him always at it." I don't quote this as a considered statement, or the result of profound thought, but it made a deep impression on my mind as revealing a different psychology in the British soldier, to that of the French. Anyhow, I give it for what it is worth.

Twice I went to the Front. First as a Member of Parliament picked for the purpose, and secondly as a member of the War Office Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee. I have a vivid memory of visiting Haig's headquarters, located in a chateau in a park, at the gates of which were two mounted men carrying lances with pennants attached. There was a quiet and peaceful atmosphere prevailing and it was difficult to believe we were at the edge of a gigantic battle which was raging a few miles away. There was an air of unreality about the place. Perhaps it was right, but I came away with an impression that there was a certain lack of vitality. Haig was charming and courteous and gave us a nice lunch and showed us on the map how operations were proceeding. It must not be thought I am criticising—I don't know enough about the war business to form a judgment—but I am recording the impression I received.

Very different was our visit to General Plumer's headquarters, which was in a very ordinary house at Albert. After a talk we had tea with him: he sat at the head of the table and poured out tea. His staff were there and discussed everything with the greatest freedom. General Harington was his Chief of Staff. He afterwards was transferred to the War Office and gave evidence before our committee. He was one of Plumer's discoveries and he had a very incisive mind. Plumer had the reputation of discovering ability and bringing it to the front.

Plumer sent our party into Ypres, which was then still under gunfire, but visibility was bad and it was considered safe to crawl through the trenches and see some of the havoc wrought by the enemy, and the conditions under which our men worked.

Our committee was an economy committee and we did see the working of the military machine from that point of view. Curiously enough, in spite of the pressure of constant fighting our investigations showed far greater care near the field of operations to husband resources than at the home base. I think the explanation is that the most competent men were overseas, while the depots at home were left to "dugouts" or the less efficient.

The War Office was only one phase of the work of the committee,

and the main committee covered all departments involved in the conduct of the war. I am satisfied it exercised a healthy influence and that, quite apart from the waste that it unearthed, its very existence did make those responsible take more care of public money, which in wartime there is a temptation to squander. Early in the 1939 war I advocated the recreating of this Expenditure Committee in the light of my previous experience, but at first I met with considerable opposition in official quarters. In the end, as the proposal received considerable support from back benchers of all sides, the committee was re-established and did fine work under the chairmanship of Sir John Wardlaw-Milne.

Unlike 1945, in 1918 the Armistice came quite unexpectedly and without warning. I was sitting in my office in the Law Courts when the air raid warning sounded, to be immediately followed by the ringing of church bells and a scene of indescribable enthusiasm. Twice in my life peace was to cut short my parliamentary career. I received a hint that if I liked to go to Downing Street and eat humble pie I would not have a Tory opponent against me. But I valued my independence more than anything, and I stayed away. My pride was to cost me dear.

When I started my campaign, I was well received. The local Tory paper told me that I need not expect an opponent, and for the first few days there was no sign of one. I met Viscount Churchill, who knew about my work for the Volunteer Force, and who was chairman of the Conservative Association. I understand he refused to preside over the adoption meeting and that their candidate showed no special desire to stand. But instructions came down from headquarters that I must be opposed, a meeting was called, over which their agent presided, and their candidate was adopted. Even that did not make much difference, I was being well received. A prominent Tory farmer wrote to the local Press saying I was the best member they had ever had. Incidentally, I had fought some of their battles in the House with considerable success. Then the thunderbolt fell. The coupon was published signed by L.G. and Bonar Law, blessing my opponent. It took the electors completely by surprise. They could not be made to realise it was just a letter that was being broadcast everywhere. It was interpreted as a personal reflection on me in particular, and it was assumed that I must have done something very wrong for a member of my own party, Lloyd George, to sign a letter supporting my opponent.

Until then all had been going well, but now my friends melted away like snow in the night. I could get few speakers to come out on my behalf and I had to rely mostly on a police court missionary and his pal, a pork butcher. My wife got very depressed and complained to my missionary friend, who in his early days had

been a tramp until one day he had seen the light and was now the prisoner's friend! "Mrs. Harris," he said, "don't worry. There is me, Bill (the pork butcher), and there is Christ!" Alas, even that support did not save me!

One unpleasant, but not unamusing experience, we had in this election. I had had a good meeting at Harborough, the town that gives its name to the constituency. Incidentally, I had been in good form that evening and a friend of mine, who had been at the back of the hall, told me afterwards that one of the audience that had been listening to my speech with obvious approval was so pleased that he turned to his companion and remarked, "'Im, 'im, he is a knowing, clever sort of fool, ain't he?" a doubtful compliment, but, I was assured, said in such a way as to signify praise. We had a car waiting outside the hall, and five of us crammed into it and drove off happily towards Leicester, where we were staying. When we were some miles on the journey the car suddenly stopped and showed no signs of continuing. I asked the driver if anything was wrong. "I don't know," he replied. "All I know is I can't get it to move." "Can't you do something to the engine?" I queried. "Is it short of oil, or what is the cause?" "I don't know," he said pathetically. "I have never driven a car before this week and I don't know anything about motor engines. I can drive and that is all." We ascertained that he had only just come out of the Army, that the garage was short of drivers and had taken him on, and later on we discovered that before the war he had been a music-hall artist.

Our party consisted, besides the driver, of my wife and myself, a Mr. Meaken, a supporter from Leicester, Miss Harvey, fresh down from Cambridge, afterwards to be the clever secretary of the National Women's Liberal Federation, and my police court missionary friend. To make matters worse the country was enveloped in a thick autumn mist and we could hardly see the sides of the road. There was nothing for it but to creep along until we found an inn. After a considerable tramp we reached a village and some sort of hotel. It was now about one a.m., but after a lot of knocking the proprietor firmly refused to let us in. Finally we found a cottage where they allowed the six of us to sit in the kitchen, where we spent the night. There were only three chairs, so three of us had to be content with the floor. The music-hall driver, living up to the tradition of his trade, never removed his hat. Our police court missionary kept us entertained through most of the night by regaling us with tales of his lurid past, when he was a tramp: how he had pinched legs of mutton or apple pies from farmers' larders when hunger necessitated. Then he said, "It came on me quite suddenly, like a vision, and I saw the error of my ways." He was a lovely

man, quite genuine and sincere, and stood out like a bright light in that depressing election. I was beaten by almost the same number of votes as I had won by. It was not all explained by the coupon, though that had most to do with it. Three other factors played a part. Under the redistribution a great slice of my constituency, the best part from my point of view, had been cut off and added to Leicester City. Secondly, this time a Labour candidate appeared and took from me a considerable number of votes. Thirdly, Ramsay MacDonald, who had been one of the members for Leicester, had said some kindly words about me which were well meant but had an unfortunate effect. At a meeting in de Montfort Hall he had said, "They are actually opposing my dear friend Percy Harris, one of the finest Radicals in the House of Commons." This did not help me with Labour, who had their own candidate, but it gave every justification to the doubtful voters for my not receiving the coupon.

As in 1945, there was in 1918 an interval between Polling Day and the counting of the votes. By mischance I had made a mistake about the time of the count and when I approached the building I was met by the smiling face of my successful opponent, who rushed up to me and grasped me by the hand. "You are second, I am first: I am in," and with a handshake he rushed off, leaving me to comfort myself as best I may.

What a gamble political life is! I was to go down with some of the ablest Liberals that have ever been in Parliament. Asquith, Herbert Samuel, Walter Runciman, to say nothing of minor lights. Labour, too, had received a bad knock. The mass mind is difficult to understand. Perhaps its instincts are all right, but it does at times work in a peculiar way, and propaganda skilfully worked can exploit it. But it is far better it should express itself in the ballot-box than by fighting in the streets, as is only too common in continental countries.

CHAPTER VII

HOUSING AND EDUCATION

My first experience of Parliament was a comparatively short one, less than three years.

Fortunately, I was not without other interests. I still represented Bethnal Green on the L.C.C., and there was plenty of work there waiting for me to do.

Housing loomed large in 1918, as it did again in 1945. In both wars house building had completely closed down, men in the industry had been scattered, and there was a shortage of skilled workers and raw materials to overcome. The Government was full of good intentions. In 1919, a Housing and Town Planning Bill was pushed through Parliament to be known as the Addison Act. It was welcomed at the time, but much criticised afterwards, largely because of its financial provisions.

The Act required each local authority to prepare and submit to the Minister of Health, within three months after 31st July, a scheme for the provision of housing accommodation to meet the needs of its particular area, and thereafter as occasion arose, or within three months after being required to do so by the Minister. All this makes very familiar reading in 1945. It might very well be Aneurin Bevan speaking instead of Dr. Addison (now Lord Addison).

If the carrying out of the scheme resulted in a loss the Ministry might, with the approval of the Treasury, pay part of it. The amount of any annual payment was to be based on the estimated annual loss, after deducting the sum not exceeding the produce of a penny rate.

This, the critics said, was likely to encourage extravagance. Local authorities would not exercise care because after they had spent the produce of a penny rate they knew they could look to the Government to find the rest. Anyhow, Addison was thrown to the wolves, and forced to resign. As a matter of fact, failure in these early post-war years had nothing to do with this Act or its financial provisions. It was failure to visualise conditions in the industry after the upheaval of a great war.

The nation, if it will not take heed of our last post-war experience, is in danger of making the same mistakes again.

In 1919, there was no reluctance to buy land and make plans ahead. During the last year of the war the L.C.C. had dropped party politics, had elected Lord Crew, the Lord Lieutenant of the County and a Liberal, chairman, and the chairmanships of several committees had been given to the Progressives. A friend of mine, H. de R. Walker, had acted as chairman of the Housing Committee, and negotiations had already been opened to purchase Roehampton Estate. This belonged to Picrpont Morgan and he was prepared to sell it below its market value, provided it was used for the housing of the working classes. It is a delightful place, situated on the edge of Wimbledon Common. Besides, it is easily accessible from South and West London. I do recommend anyone to go and look at it. It is well planned with pleasant gardens and trees, while there is reasonable variety in its development. But when the Council of

those days came to develop it, they were met with every difficulty. There was a shortage of everything, bricks, tiles, timber, and an equal shortage of skilled labour, bricklayers, plasterers, tilers, carpenters and joiners. There was a hold up at every stage of building, and prices soared to an impossible height. Cottages that were afterwards built for £350 were costing anywhere about £1,300.

But this was on a small estate easily accessible to industry, with water and main drainage adjacent. But urged on by the Government, all of us more or less agreed, if the house famine was to be met, something on a much larger scale was required.

Three thousand acres were available east of London and outside the County. Here was an opportunity for big things, and the land was duly bought. Then the trouble commenced. The estate stretched into three local government areas, Ilford, Barking and Dagenham, and I cannot honestly say the local authorities were helpful. They were not anxious to have dumped into their areas the overflow of London, mostly poor people, living in houses of low rateable value that would involve services, and would cost more than they would contribute in the way of rates. The district was dependent for water on a company that was not in a position to give the supply for such a large increase of population, and prolonged negotiations took place before this difficulty was overcome. Main drainage also presented a problem, and so did the supply of gas and electricity. When houses did go up and become occupied, there was a shortage of school accommodation, and many children had, for some time, to go without education. The district was outside the area of the London Education Authority and inside that of the Essex County Council, and at first its Education Committee looked with a jaundiced eye on the hordes of children thrust into its care. Nor was transport adequate. Trains stopped outside the boundary and bus services for a time did not reach it, while the railway did not arrange for stations for a considerable time after its inauguration. No one was to blame, nobody ever is, but I am recounting my experience as a member of the Housing Committee in the hope that it may be of some help to future housing experts. I know it is argued now that houses can come first and that it is not necessary to wait for roads. But you try building houses on a large scale in winter, without proper access, and you will soon realise the difficulty of putting the cart before the horse.

But on this great estate, finally christened Becontree, we had all the teething troubles of Roehampton, and more, shortage of materials and shortage of key labour. No one particularly wanted to go to work at a bleak undeveloped place, without even a pub available, when work could be obtained elsewhere. We tried

substitute materials with some success, such as concrete in various ways, steel and timber. I do recommend a visit to Becontree now, some twenty-five years after its inception, and I think it will be agreed our labours were not in vain. There were hard labours, and I do want to convey that houses cannot be built by waving a wand or by edicts from Whitehall.

In the end, a large-scale contract was let to one of the super-contractors. I did not like it at the time, but it was felt if we were to produce the goods exceptional measures must be taken. When the estate began to be occupied, another problem arose. There was no work for the people to do locally, and they all had to travel to London. When there were several in a family, the fares made a heavy inroad into the family budget. When unemployment became bad, and jobs difficult to find, people living away out of London naturally found they were at a disadvantage compared with those living where the offices and factories were. Many, in consequence, drifted back to London, and I was constantly coming across people in Bethnal Green who had been a year in Becontree, but had returned to their old overcrowded quarters where they had more prospect of getting jobs. However, Fords saved the situation. They opened up their big works there and others followed. I do press the need of working out the development of new housing estates in co-operation with industry.

In the early years when we were working out the plans for Becontree, Bernard Holland was chairman of the Housing Committee. One less like a county councillor could not possibly be imagined. He can best be described as a scholar and a gentleman. Actually, he had a considerable literary reputation. In his own quiet way he showed great interest in the work. Faced as we were with constant difficulties with the local authorities, he reported in favour of special local government powers for Becontree so that it could be developed on garden-city lines. I strongly supported him, but the idea was not received with favour and it was turned down. I am convinced, if large tracts of land are to be taken over to meet housing needs, they should be developed like Letchworth or as satellite towns. If you don't, you are bound to run up against vested interests who will put obstacles in your way and cause needless delays. What is worse, you get lop-sided development and get only one class of house. The garden city does aim at variety, provision for industry, and planning, so that you have a properly balanced social life.

Becontree and Roehampton were by no means the limit of our activities. Other estates were bought, and progress began to look promising, when the Geddes Axe fell and there was a hold-up. The move for economy permeated through from Downing Street

to County Hall. A Colonel Levita was appointed chairman, and it was generally understood his task was to slow down housing expenditure. He can be said to have come to curse and remained to bless. He was a soldier and had very much the military manner. But like everyone who has been brought up against the reality of the housing shortage, he soon became a convert and brought considerable drive into the work.

I have mentioned that at Becontree our committee made many experiments in the use of substitute materials, which reminds me of an amusing incident when we went to inspect an Atholl house that had been put up in a works in the East End. The committee was shown round the building by a smart, live man, who explained every detail of construction. When members made suggestions for alterations and improvements, he would take his foot rule, make measurements and calculations, and then quickly work out the exact cost the change would involve. We were impressed by his capacity and knowledge of his job. One of our party, a Socialist woman who had no use for privilege, turned to the clerk of the committee after the inspection was over and said, "This house should be named after the man who has just shown us round, and not after the Duke of Atholl." "But," replied the clerk, "that is the duke himself." Collapse of our Socialist colleague, who was reduced to silence and had nothing more to say. The duke had had engineering training and obviously knew his job. On the whole, if everything is taken into consideration, durability, resistance to weather changes, and general appearance, the brick house has proved over generations the most suitable for our climate. But when neither the materials nor labour are available, substitute materials can provide decent homes provided great care is taken in their selection and the way they are used.

At one time, at the height of the shortage, the committee bought Courtrai tiles and French bricks that can be seen in the houses at Roehampton. They proved quite satisfactory and did help us to get the houses built, but when the main Council heard of it, in the light of their Protectionist theories, importations were stopped, though by that time the position had eased.

I have always attached more importance to putting up new houses than pulling down old ones. . Once there are enough houses to go round and there is a surplus number of rooms, it is reasonable to assume, under the law of supply and demand, both slums and overcrowding will tend to disappear. But the problem is not quite so simple as it sounds. There are people who must live near their work, and there will always be an inclination for certain classes of workers to congregate near the centre of the town. Dockers don't want to be far from the river front, carmen find it convenient to be

close to the warehouses, and office cleaners and charwomen must be near where their services are needed. On the other hand, the old and worn property is naturally near the centre of the town. For instance, Bethnal Green caters for the requirements of the business and industry of the City of London, and if its inhabitants leave the district they cannot exercise their trades.

One area, known as Brady Street, was notoriously bad, and before 1914 was long overdue for clearance. The houses, built in the very worst period, long before the time of the Buildings Acts, had no damp-courses, were thoroughly insanitary, many had no connection with the main drainage, while the whole area was badly planned and laid out. It had been reported on and condemned over and over again by the Medical Officer of Health, but for one reason or other nothing was done. Just before the war of 1914, the L.C.C. did decide to take action, but with the outbreak of hostilities it was decided not to proceed further. This was more than I could stand, and I don't mind revealing that I went behind the backs of the committee and saw Herbert Samuel, who was then at the old Local Government Board, with the result that he instructed the Council not to hold up the plans. Therefore, when the war ended this area was the first one to be tackled. Instead of the wretched hovels that were apologies for homes, can be seen pleasant blocks of flats surrounding a garden. Don't let it be understood that I prefer flats to cottages. On the contrary, people with children can never be as happy in flats as in small houses with back gardens and with direct access to the street. And quite apart from like and dislike, I do find people living in houses, even the poor little old-fashioned houses of the East End, are generally more human and make better citizens. In a great block of flats people tend to lose their identity and become mass-minded. Besides, a man with a backyard can have his hobbies, keep poultry, rabbits, dogs and cats. I know one man in a back street in a typical Bethnal Green house who has in his yard a tank in which he keeps live eels, and earns a living by converting them into jellied eels.

The antipathy to living in block dwellings was well brought home to me after the first buildings were opened for occupation. I saw a group of typical East End women gossiping outside their cottage doors and looking at me with by no means friendly eyes. "Well, mother," I said to the woman who was obviously the leader, "what do you think of the new flats?" "Not much," came the prompt reply. "But," I said, "they are well built and they are light and airy and have bathrooms." "Bathrooms," she answered, "what's the use of them to the likes of us? We'd much rather have backyards." And almost in unison they said, "You leave our little houses alone, or no more votes from us." So that was the

reward for my good intentions, but I understand their point of view. Certainly I do not want all the people of the East End and poorer quarters of the town to be nothing but flat-dwellers!

Housing was by no means the only interest I had on the L.C.C. I continued to take an active interest in education. I have already mentioned the Bethnal Green Men's Institute, but I think it is worth a little more space.

The black-coated worker received ample opportunity for continued education in the evening institutes, so did the craftsman and specialist. But up to 1922, though there was nothing to prevent him attending the many classes that gave lessons in almost every conceivable subject, the London working man did not have any special facilities that appealed to him. Of course there were working men's colleges that in their conception aimed at providing classes for the man in the street, but though some did go to them, they all tended to become a bit highbrow and swamped with superior people.

Stewart Headlam was conscious of this deficiency and he persuaded the Education Committee of the L.C.C. to make a new experiment. Its success depended entirely upon who was found to be its first head. In his constant visits to schools, Headlam had come across an assistant master with a striking personality who, because he could not show scholastic attainments, had never been able to get on the promotion list. In him he felt he had the man for the new experiment, and he persuaded the appropriate sub-committee to appoint him. What the committee did was to say to the happy warrior, here is an elementary school, there is Bethnal Green, we will second you for three years to the headship, on the understanding if you don't succeed in creating something useful you will return to your old rank.

The gentleman in question, Percy Wagstaff, appeared one morning in Bethnal Green, with no staff and no pupils, with the mission to create a brand new working men's institute of a new character. Had he not had a touch of genius he could not have succeeded. He wandered about the streets, stopping anyone that looked a likely victim. At first he did not get much encouragement. Most of them scouted the idea of going back to school, they had left it years ago and had had quite enough of it then. A public-house was more in their line. Wagstaff found a few costers who had a horse and wanted to learn more about the care of horses. So he opened, as I well remember, with a veterinary class, and a few grim-looking toughs sat round the room listening to a "vet" on how to look after animals. This did not go too well until Wagstaff conceived the idea of having a living specimen, and borrowed a pony from one of the members. That caught on, but

you can understand the consternation of the headmistress of the infants' school, in whose hall the class was held, when she found traces of the horse droppings left by the visitor the night before! Relations between the new institute and the elementary school that occupied the place in the daytime were not too harmonious. But this class did give the new experiment some shape. Livestock made an appeal, and classes on poultry, rabbits and pets quickly developed. But even then suspicion of the new institute remained, and adults who had left school six years before were not attracted to joining a class. So Wagstaff worked on different lines and decided to form clubs and societies around which education could revolve. A whole series of clubs were formed: rabbit club, poultry club, camera club, dramatic society, boxing club and so on, each electing its own chairman and secretary, but generally with the indefatigable Wagstaff as president and with his watchful eye always on it. These clubs had the responsibility to find their own members, and except a quota could be recruited the L.C.C. would not recognise the class and the salary of the instructor would not be found. The musical side had its ups and downs. At one time they had an excellent orchestra, but as the men became proficient they were inclined to take professional engagements or join better-trained combinations. At one time the dramatic society produced some excellent plays. They started with Cockney dialects and I had visions of the Bethnal Green Players doing in a small way something like that which is done by the Irish Players. Most of the men wanted to improve their English, and they would aim higher and do society dramas which were outside their scope. Boxing and gymnastics played a big part, the former in particular. The East End has always had a fine tradition for boxing, and they put up some excellent bouts in an improvised ring. Of course, there is always the temptation for an amateur to turn professional. The art side almost from the start proved a success. Wagstaff has real gifts for unearthing the right kind of teacher who takes an interest in the type of man attracted to the institute. Many of the men showed real skill with brush and pencil. A modelling class came later, and became very popular. Of course, Bethnal Green being traditionally associated with the cabinet-making industry, wood-work made a special appeal, and some excellent furniture was turned out by the members.

I became intensely interested in the institute from its early days, and did everything I could to help it. Wagstaff had no use for superior people, what you might describe as the white-collar brigade, and when they applied he generally headed them off and sent them to the ordinary institute. He aimed at helping the man who worked with his hands, and none were too rough to be discouraged from

entering the institute. In the early years the men used to have an annual dinner, and very cheery affairs they were. I took to these dinners men like G. K. Chesterton, who was quite in his element, with his cloak and wide-awake hat. But on formal occasions I brought many distinguished visitors to open their shows, among them Lord Halifax, Lord Haldane, Herbert Fisher, and most of the heads of the old Board of Education, Donald McLean, Lord Eustace Percy, Ramsbotham (now Lord Soulsbury), the Duchess of Atholl, and many others, and they all enjoyed these visits immensely. It was something different from what they had experienced elsewhere. There was an absence of pomposity and the usual conventions, while Wagstaff was a host in himself, ready and able to tell good stories and make the members of the institute come out of their shells and talk and laugh and to treat their visitor as one of themselves, instead of as visitors from another land, to be kept at arm's length.

In a rash moment at one of these dinners, I had promised the members that they should have their own building, instead of being on sufferance in the building used during the day as an elementary school. As luck would have it, Turin Street School, a quite old-fashioned place but architecturally not unpleasant, was no longer wanted as a day school. It had the advantage of being on the main road, and George Gater, who was then Education Officer, was sympathetic and interested in the work. With a few alterations and the addition of a hall it was converted into the institute's own building. By 1939 the Bethnal Green Men's Institute had 3,000 men on the roll, of all ages from eighteen to sixty. But, alas, in the war it fell on evil days. Most of its members joined up in one or other of the Services, while the black-out and air raids caused the attendance to become irregular. However, Wagstaff bravely carried on.* The poultry and rabbit clubs were well backed by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Food. The Duke of Norfolk came down, as Under Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, to open their annual show and visit some of the back gardens, where not only hens and rabbits were kept but vegetables grown. One member presented him with a dozen eggs and another with a buck rabbit. He was so delighted with his experience that he came again the next year and told them that, inspired by their example, he had started a rabbit club in Arundel.

I have written of this institute at length because it was a pioneer. Others have been opened on similar lines. I hope when the Education Act does come into operation this movement will become general and that it will not be overshadowed by the more pretentious colleges that are promised under the new dispensation.

*Since writing the above, I have to record with deep regret Mr. Wagstaff's death to the great loss of the Institute.

It is a long jump from the men's institute to day nurseries, but these latter were rivals in my affections.

During the 1914 war, Miss Robins, headmistress of Somerford Street School, later to be known as Stewart Headlam School, discovered that many of the mothers who went out to work had nowhere to put their babies. So she calmly took possession of an abandoned building in the school yard that had been used for blind children, and with the aid of the Norland nurses converted it into a day nursery. Headlam was its first president and then I succeeded him. It carried on into the peace and I then persuaded the Council to grant both a lease and put the structure in order. Eventually we got a grant from the Ministry of Health through the Borough Council. But how it was financed was something of a miracle. We always employed a Norland nurse as head, and the Norland nurses created it as their mission, subscribed themselves, and got help from the ladies for whom they worked. The Norland nurse works in people's homes, and it became quite the practice for them to persuade the mothers of the children for whom they worked to send our nursery toys, clothes, and even money. But the most amusing way we had of raising money was the Annual Pound Day. The children of the surrounding schools interested themselves in what they came to regard as their nursery. I used to find for them some distinguished person to receive the gifts. The Lord Mayor came one year, both Princess Arthur of Connaught and the Duchess of Atholl came, and we also had the one and only Lady Astor, who, of course, enjoyed herself and made us all happy. The Duchess of Kent, who was interested in the Norland nurses, honoured the nursery with a special visit.

As many as a thousand children or more brought gifts to the Pound Day, from small infants to boys and girls from the senior classes. We had enough washing soda to last us for a whole year. Odd pieces of soap, safety pins, even a single sweet or a halfpenny, were dropped into the ample baskets. Our visitors always enjoyed themselves, while the children joined in the fun and regarded it as a gala day.

The nursery did great work. Quite apart from the help it was to women who, for various reasons, had to go out to work, it taught mothercraft to the neighbourhood. Though most of the children that went to our nursery came from the poorest homes, you could almost pick them out because of their superior physique. They were fed and taught regular habits from birth, how to eat at table, how to keep themselves clean and wash their teeth, no easy thing to learn in overcrowded homes with whole families living in one room.

But I have a firm conviction that day nurseries should be available everywhere. The day of large houses, staffs of servants, children's nurseries, nurses and nursemaids are gone for ever, except for the very rich, and even for them I don't think they are very desirable. An intelligent woman finds it an intolerable burden to be tied for twenty-four hours a day with a baby or small child. That is a very decisive factor in the decline of the birth-rate. But if, for a few hours a day, a mother could take her child to a well-ordered day nursery while she did her shopping or even went out to work, it would quite alter woman's attitude to motherhood. Too often now it is no baby at all, or one is quite enough. I know there is a type of mind which is never tired of reiterating "Woman's place is in the home," but it is a doctrine generally preached by those with little or no experience. If woman's place is in the home, it must be a good home with reasonable breaks for rest and recreation.

Alas, with the outbreak of war our nursery was evacuated. First it contained only Bethnal Green children, but gradually babies from other parts infiltrated into it, and it has now little connection with the district. Perhaps it will come back, but it will never be quite the same. Miss Robins, the founder, is dead. Miss Taylor, the matron, has married the treasurer and has left, and I am afraid some of the romance has gone out of our experiment. There are plenty of other nurseries, wartime nurseries among others, but the Bethnal Green Day Nursery at Somerford Street was something just a little different and quite worth doing.

But to return to the L.C.C. Things there were not static. Personnel was changing and I regret to say the great Progressive Party was declining in strength and Labour was asserting its independence and forming a separate party. Sir John Benn resigned the leadership and was replaced by the Rev. Dr. Scott Lidgett. Lidgett is an able man, one of the most fluent speakers I have ever met, and had knowledge of every conceivable subject. He was a man of impeccable character and had given the whole of his life to good work, particularly in Bermondsey, where for a long time he was head of a settlement. Headlam used to say of him that he would have made an excellent Bishop. Unfortunately he was not qualified, being a member of the Wesleyan Church. But for all his good qualities, by the very cloth he wore and by his whole make-up he was not cut out for a political leader. Every man to his last, and parsons do not make good politicians. Headlam was clever enough to know that, and he never aimed at being a political leader. He was keen on politics, but that is quite another matter from pretending to be a politician. Scott Lidgett did not like the Labour Party and showed it, and that widened the breach. Nothing

would have prevented it, but we might have walked more in step and have delayed the break-away.

But, of course, the appearance in London of Herbert Morrison as political organiser changed the whole political scene. He worked and organised in every borough, creating Labour cells everywhere, while Liberals were busy fighting among themselves over the rival personalities of Asquith and Lloyd George. Curiously enough, on the principle of Municipal Trading, which had always been a Socialist slogan, it was the Labour Party that first made a break from that principle. It was Herbert Morrison who introduced the bill, as Minister of Transport, that transferred the trams from the L.C.C. to the London Transport Board. I am not sure the change was altogether a good one. It created a complete monopoly outside direct public control. I don't think there was much wrong with the Council's management of the trams.

Meanwhile the Progressives diminished as Labour expanded. For a time we struggled on as a second party on the Council, but finally we found ourselves in the third place. Stewart Headlam died, much mourned by thousands of teachers throughout the whole of London. Dr. Davidson, then Archbishop of Canterbury, sent to his grave a wreath of red roses, his favourite flower, and made amends for the years of misunderstanding between him and the Church of which he was a devoted communicant. I became chairman of a committee to perpetuate his memory. We endowed a bed in the Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital, and we provided a fund to give Shakespeare plays in the schools, and to encourage the performance of plays each year by the evening institutes. A plaque, too, was placed outside the flat in Wilmot Street, where in his early days as a curate he had lived. Fortunately he died in harness. He got up from a sick bed to visit his beloved evening institutes. When he lay dying at his home in Twickenham, he was heard to murmur that he wanted to go home. "You are at home," said the friends at his bedside. "No," he was heard to say, "I want to be in Bethnal Green."

A noble character passed away, I am afraid already forgotten in these rapidly changing times. But if ever there was an unselfish public servant, devoted to the cause of mankind, it was Stewart Headlam. I found, as his successor, Ronald Jones, F.R.I.B.A., an architect who for years had interested himself in a Mission Church in Bethnal Green. He is a cultured man, a scholar, a good painter and a pianist and, strange combination, a champion diver and president of the Amateur Diving Association. He did excellent work on the L.C.C., but he came late into public life and he could not claim the same hold on Bethnal Green as Headlam.

In 1931, I found myself leader of a party of six. I could not

give all my time to the L.C.C. as I was also in the House of Commons, but we did assert ourselves on occasions and kept alive Progressive principles. Unemployment was the dominant issue and put everything else in the shade. When the triennial election came along we did not unduly exert ourselves. The Municipal Reformers did not trouble to put up a candidate against us in S.W. Bethnal Green: they had tried so often and failed they did not think it worth while. But Labour did, though we did not take our two opponents very seriously. There had been no more severe critic of the Means Test than I had been, yet this was used as a weapon to destroy us. As the party of the right was not attacking us, we became identified with it and were held up to opprobrium. Therefore, in 1934, after twenty-eight years, my membership of the L.C.C. was brought to an end, and with it, the Progressive Party.

I had found it a strain to combine membership of the House of Commons with membership of the County Council, and from that point of view it was a happy release. But I do regret the end of the Progressive Party. They had done great things for London and left a more indelible impression than Labour has succeeded in doing.

In 1889, they initiated a new era in London and the momentum of their activities went on long after they ceased to be in power.

There are great things still waiting to be done for London. The destructions of the war present an opportunity for its replanning that has never occurred before, except after the Great Fire when Christopher Wren presented his bold scheme.

Some of my ideas appear in my book on London and its government. Time will show whether new men and new women will arise to revive the old spirit that inspired the Progressives in the heyday of their power.

CHAPTER VIII

BACK IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE Coalition Government in 1918 swept the country. The Coupon did the trick and few got elected without it. Lloyd George had his majority but most of his old Liberal colleagues had disappeared in the process. Asquith was defeated and so were all his friends of Cabinet rank. McKenna, Runciman, Samuel, McKinnon Wood, all were out of Parliament. Asquith nominated Donald Maclean as Chairman of the Parliamentary Party and apart from Sir Francis Acland and Wedgwood Benn, few of his followers had had much previous experience.

Labour fared just as badly. Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden and Arthur Henderson all lost their seats.

Lloyd George had undisputed sway of the parliamentary machine. The opposition was negligible and he apparently could do what he liked. That was his undoing: he could not call his soul his own. The Tories never really liked him: they viewed him with suspicion: they just used him as long as it suited them. This is not a political history: anyhow, I only viewed the parliamentary scene from outside.

L.G.'s instincts were all right, but he had to cut his coat according to his cloth. I often had talks with him and he was always brilliant in conversation. He responded to good ideas more quickly than any man I ever met, but I always felt he reached his conclusions more by intuition than by clear reasoning. He was dependent upon his environment, and the men around him after the war were Tories. Balfour, Curzon, Bonar Law were the three outstanding figures. It is true there was Winston Churchill, but he was suspect and he had not yet recovered the reputation he lost over the Dardanelles. I think it is reasonable to say that in the immediate years after the war he did not play a big part in influencing policy, though of course he could not be anywhere without making an impression. Someone who visited the House of Commons in those days, looking down from the gallery on the members below, remarked that they looked like a lot of hard-faced men who had done well out of the war. Most of them were wealthy and ready to subscribe to the party funds, especially when they were likely to have their generosity recognised by their names appearing in the honours list.

But there was a small group of young Tories who never had much use for Lloyd George and who in the end were to manœuvre his destruction. I was busy with my work at the L.C.C. But the Tory who defeated Masterman at the by-election was still M.P. for S.W. Bethnal Green. Sir Matthew Wilson was a major in the Army, a great sport, and knew a lot about horses, anyhow much more about them than politics. He had a cheerful attractive personality. His friends called him Scatters Wilson, while in Bethnal Green he was popularly known as "the Major." I had been so long associated with the borough it was not surprising I was adopted as prospective Liberal candidate, and when the General Election came in 1922 I was well ready for the fight. It soon got about that Wilson was not assiduous in his attentions to his parliamentary duties, but he did know how to make himself liked.

One man I met in the street wished me luck at the election, but when I asked if he were going to vote for me he replied in the negative. "You see, Mr. 'Arris, Mr. Wilson he gave my child a

'alf a crown, and 'alf a crown is a 'alf a crown." I am afraid I could not deny his logic. My second opponent was a man called Joe Vaughan, who ran as Labour but was actually a Communist. He had a forceful personality and became Mayor of Bethnal Green, and at the time was a great power in the district. However, in the end he overdid the airing of his Communist views and shocked the neighbourhood by naming some flats built by the Council, "Lenin House." One of my old Liberal women supporters told a story about a call Vaughan made at her house, and this is how she told it. "Is it true, Mr. Vaughan, that you don't believe in God?" "Yes, of course it is," he replied. "Look at the houses round here. If there was a God he would not allow them." "Then, Mr. Vaughan, who do you think makes the flowers grow, the Labour Party?" And he went away sorrowing, though to get a real kick out of the story you should have heard the old lady tell it. But Vaughan was a great fighter, and he worked hard and had a lot of keen supporters. One incident is worth recording. After I was elected M.P., I was invited by the National Unemployed Association to attend a mass meeting at the Town Hall: Wal Hannington was the secretary of the organisation and it was regarded as Communist. On my way to the meeting I met the local Inspector of Police. "I hear you've been invited to the Unemployed Meeting; I wouldn't go if I were you," he said. "It will be a rough house." "Well," I answered, "what can they do to me? If they break my head I shall be sure of re-election, if I am still alive to tell the tale." What actually happened was that when I arrived at the Town Hall no one took any notice of me. However, I took a seat on the platform, and even then I was ignored. The chairman opened the meeting by abusing the Government in particular and the capitalist system in general. At the conclusion of his speech, without turning to me or giving me any warning, he said, "We have one of the members for Bethnal Green here, and I suppose we shall have to hear what he has to say." The hall was packed from floor to ceiling, and when I rose I was received more or less in silence. I did not make a party speech or reply to the chairman. I simply explained what the Government schemes for providing work were, what the L.C.C. was doing, and what steps they should take to get the jobs provided. When I sat down many asked me questions, mostly on how to set about getting the jobs and where they should apply. I had fortified myself with the replies beforehand and knew most of the answers. The men were obviously interested, most of them only wanted work. The audience was with me and I was getting on quite well, when the chairman intervened, remarking: "We didn't come here to have questions, but to listen to speeches; I call on comrade Vaughan." The comrade opened his discourse by saying that when he heard

Percy was here he knew he would tell the tale, and he then proceeded to abuse me and everything I stood for. I listened to the whole of his speech and then explained I had another engagement and left the hall. I heard afterwards that the sympathy of the genuine unemployed was all with me. They considered I had been unfairly used and were grateful for the information I had given them. I have always had faith in the sense of fair play of the working man.

By about 1921, the Lloyd George Government was rapidly losing ground. Unemployment was a big factor, but the Black and Tans in Ireland and their methods of suppressing the rebellion were a contributory factor. But the Government came to an end by internal disruption. Lloyd George was genuinely in sympathy with the Greeks: his leanings, as a Welshman, were always with the small nations. Besides, the Turks did threaten our position in Constantinople. The Chanak incident suggested the possibility of another war. Baldwin, who was President of the Board of Trade, but generally regarded as very small beer, was not happy at the turn of events in the Middle East, and not having any particular love of Lloyd George, resigned. This caused at first only a small ripple on the political waters. But some of the bigwigs in the Tory caucus were growing tired of the Coalition and thought the situation serious enough to call a meeting of the party at the Carlton Club. On the day of the meeting Runciman ran into Baldwin, who was very depressed at the whole situation. Runciman invited him to lunch with him at the Carlton Grill, when he opened his heart to him. Baldwin was quite convinced that this was the end of his political career, but he disliked L.G. and all his ways, and felt he could no longer go on with him. Most of the leading men in the party were with L.G. Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead, Robert Horne. The meeting at first did not go too well for Baldwin. Then Bonar Law intervened, came down heavily on his side and swung the party over in his direction, and decided the fate of the Coalition.

Here I should like to say a word or two about Stanley Baldwin. I knew him before 1914, when he was almost an unknown back bencher. I used to meet him at the old City Liberal Club, where he occasionally lunched with a man called Daw, who was a fellow director of one of his companies. We were all Free Traders and we often pulled Baldwin's leg about his Protectionist leanings. Donald Maclean was chairman, in 1916, of what was called the House of Commons Appeal Tribunal, that heard appeals from men who wanted exemption from military service. Baldwin was also a member, and one day he came to Maclean and said he had been offered the position of Parliamentary Private Secretary to Bonar Law, an honorary post that usually goes to a junior member of the

House. But most of the younger men were in the Army, so the Whips had to fall back on a comparatively senior member. Baldwin did not want to accept the offer, said it was not in his line, he was a busy man and, besides, he liked the work on the tribunal and did not want to give it up. Donald said he would arrange to make it convenient for him to go on with his work. "Anyhow," he said, "accept: it might lead to a knighthood: Bonar has great influence." That appointment was the making of Baldwin. Bonar Law was a shy man, with deep affections. He took to Baldwin and made him in turn Financial Secretary to the Treasury, President of the Board of Trade, and when he formed his own government, Chancellor of the Exchequer. When Bonar Law resigned owing to ill health Baldwin became his natural successor as Prime Minister.

I kept Baldwin's friendship. I was always in the opposite camp, but I liked the man, he is a lovable person, very human, with a high sense of duty but, I always felt, overplaced by circumstance as Prime Minister. He always kept a back-bench mind and had a kind of inferiority complex though I believe he had more wisdom than he gave himself credit for. His besetting sin was laziness: he left things much too much to his departmental Ministers, most of whom were far inferior to himself. One thing he did do; he broke down the barrier between the Labour men and the rest of the House. He did his best to bring the two forces together, not to agree, but to be tolerant of each other. The House was at one time in danger of becoming a bear garden, but by his wise leadership and real good humour, he restored the courtesies of debate. But I am going a bit fast.

The 1922 election was a strenuous one and I had to put in a lot of work, and therefore felt the need of secretarial help. I approached the Eighty Club, the organisation that produced speakers and workers for the party. They introduced me to a Miss Vera Brittain, who was, however, too busy to take it on, but she handed me over to Winifred Holtby, who became my secretary until the end of the election. Vera has written much about that election in her successful book, *The Testament of Youth*, and even more appears about it in Winifred's published letters. Vera and Winifred had been at Oxford together and both served in the Army overseas. They were clever and imaginative and were a great help to me. Winifred was a charming person, intelligent and most attractive to look at. Her novels are full of ideas and very well written. Her courage was not equalled by her strength, and just as she was winning literary fame, she passed away after a long illness. In the election she characteristically did not spare herself, working in the office, speaking and canvassing and doing everything she could to help. One evening, Stewart Headlam and

I were dining with her at Liverpool Street prior to a meeting. Suddenly she went deadly pale and fainted. She quickly recovered, but nothing would persuade her to go home and rest, and she carried on with her work. I was very lucky in the people who came to help me at my election. They came from all over London and I owe much of my success to their hard work, going from door to door conveying my message personally to the electors. Many of my meetings were stormy, but when they were over they left no bitterness. At one of them a very unpleasant person in a grey hat was constantly interrupting and I rather gathered he was not even a Bethnal Greener. Next morning I met a burly street-trader friend of mine who asked me what I thought of the man in the grey hat. "Not much," I said, "but he didn't last long." "No," said my burly supporter, "I says to him, hold your noise and he wouldn't stop. Unlucky I didn't have me beetle crushers on, only me pumps, but you'll never hear him again." Certainly there was a scuffle at the back of the hall and then I had peace.

Headlam took the chair at most of my meetings at this election and he paid me the graceful compliment of saying that I had never spoken down to my electors. I am sure the electors prefer to be taken seriously even if occasionally one does talk a bit over their heads.

There are two divisions of Bethnal Green, South West and North East. I represented South West and Mr. Garnham Edmonds, also a Liberal, for a time represented North East. He was a tall, handsome man, with a great shock of hair. He had a shop in Bethnal Green Road, where he sold tripe and offal. He continued to serve behind the counter after he was elected M.P., and would go every morning to Smithfield Market at six-thirty to make his purchases. He had been Mayor of the Borough and was known to almost everyone but, alas, he was defeated by Labour, though if anybody could claim to have worked for his living, surely Garnham Edmonds had special title to the claim. This reminds me of an amusing incident. My Association always called itself the "Liberal Radicals and Labour Association," and before 1918 our candidates had never been opposed by Labour at the local Borough Council elections, and my friends, all of whom were working men, resented the claim of the Socialists to a monopoly of the word Labour. My friend George Bailey was in the chair at the meeting to select candidates. Bailey was a wheelwright and made barrows for the street traders. "They say," he said, "I'm not Labour," and he held up two grimy hands with pride at which the audience cheered. I pushed mine in my pockets, ashamed at their cleanliness. Up rose Tom Brookes, a chimney-sweep. "George Bailey says look at his hands: I say look at my hands," and Tom displayed two hands

ingrained with soot and hard work. My hands went deeper into my pockets. I have never before or since felt so ashamed of clean hands, and when I dig in my garden or pull weeds I do feel some satisfaction that I can on occasion say, "look at my hands."

The 1922 Parliament was a short one. Bonar Law was only to enjoy being Prime Minister for a little time and Baldwin found himself quite unexpectedly raised to the giddy height of Prime Minister.

L.G. well described Bonar Law's government as a Ministry of Under Secretaries, and it was certainly composed of very small fry with such distinguished Conservatives out of it as Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead and Robert Horne.

But there were two wings of the Liberal Party, one led by Mr. Asquith and another by Mr. Lloyd George. Many attempts were made by back benchers to bring the two leaders together and heal the breach, but without success. Then, in the summer of 1923, Baldwin went down to Plymouth and made the famous speech in which he claimed he could not find a remedy for unemployment until he was released from the pledge not to impose a protective tariff. That provided the cement that joined the two Liberal sections together. It, alas, was not a very hard cement and it did not stand the strain of adverse weather. I am an unrepentant Free Trader and I am convinced that half the troubles in the world are caused by monkeying about with tariffs. That does not mean that under no circumstances whatever must the State intervene in the course of trade. Conditions may arise after a great war when people are short of the bare necessities of life, where governments have a bounden duty to regulate the flow of imports and give priorities to foodstuffs over luxuries like grand pianos and jewellery. But that is quite another story to imposing a general protective tariff. Even the short experience of import duties before 1939 provides ample evidence that they tend to promote combines, trusts and cartels, and that the consumer is always made to suffer by high prices and short supply. But there is a deeper reason for my dislike of tariffs. Nothing, I am convinced, has more accentuated aggressive nationalism than protective tariffs. Countries have found themselves shut out from their natural markets by customs duties. And this feeling is exacerbated by subsidies and exchange restrictions which emphasise national prejudices and encourage the war spirit. If only goods can be kept out, it is argued, there will be no unemployment and work will be available to all. The next step is to wish to fight the foreigner: that is the cause of all the trouble. And ambitious politicians in every country are tempted to exploit this feeling to the full. But if goods flow freely across frontiers, and trade goes on without let or hindrance, nations are brought together

to their mutual advantage. Europe has been cursed by the multitude of its trade barriers. England, until 1914, was the one bright spot in a wicked world and the main reason her vast possessions and great wealth were tolerated was that she alone allowed free access to her markets, and her own people benefited by a low cost of living and abundant supplies. But this is a digression.

Lloyd George jumped into the battle for Free Trade with all his accustomed zeal and energy and with a superabundance of eloquence. But his years of association with the Coalition had loosened his hold on the people. They did not listen to him with the same rapt attention as in the old days. Anyhow, I found in Bethnal Green his name was no longer one to conjure with, and my association with him was thrown back at me as something of a reproach.

However, Asquith and Lloyd George did in the 1923 election march in step, but this unity came too late. There was a newer force which was growing every day. Labour, too, came out against tariffs, and when the votes came to be counted they were the second largest party in the House and the Liberals had to be content with third place. Much has been written about Asquith putting Labour in. I was a party to it, and I am sure he had no alternative. The country had been challenged on the Protectionist issue. Baldwin had said he could not carry on without tariffs and in no uncertain way the electors had rejected them. I think, however, Labour and Liberal leaders should have come together and agreed to a programme of legislation. They had many policies in common and it would not have been impossible to select certain of them, without Liberals being members of the Government. But Ramsay MacDonald, though he had great charm, was a vain man and not easy to co-operate with, and the Labour Party has always had to stand the charge from their left wing of association with a capitalist party. When early in 1924 Parliament met, Liberals were united in an apparently happy brotherhood. But I am afraid the unity was very much on the surface. Neither Alfred Mond nor Captain Guest, survivors of the old Coalition days, favoured the independence of the Liberal Party, and this was obvious at every party meeting. There was a distinct cleavage of thought. The old Coalitionists were always looking for excuses to vote with the Tories, while the Independent Liberals were pressing for radical reforms and were only too glad to support legislation of a kind they had been advocating for years.

I was every time with the Radicals, and representing Bethnal Green, how could it be otherwise.

Alfred Mond was a strange person. He was physically unattractive, very untidy and had an unwashed appearance. His voice was guttural and he spoke through his nose. He had no platform

graces and had the habit of punctuating each sentence with, "Eh, what!" which was not unamusing but irritating. But he had a fine brain and a logical mind. Members did not want to listen to him but were forced to first out of curiosity and then, in spite of themselves, were convinced by the skill with which he argued his case. He loved to talk in the smoking room, and if any man ever thought aloud it was he. He was up to his neck in big business, but the nation owes a lot to the enterprise of his family. For a time he was very much in with Lloyd George, though in the end the two men fell out and Mond went right over to the Tories. He was quite cynical about politics and looked on them very much as a game to be played for big stakes, and I don't think he understood the point of view of those of us who took them seriously. But I mention him because in the 1924 Parliament he was a big influence and helped to encompass the fall of the Labour Government.

It is curious now to look back at the list of Ministers that formed the first Labour Cabinet only twenty-one years ago. Most of them are dead, and the few that have survived, J. R. Clynes, Noel Buxton, J. H. Thomas and C. P. Trevelyan, have quite passed out of the public eye. Attlee, Ammon, Arthur Greenwood, A. V. Alexander and Shinwell were only Under Secretaries. One of the outstanding successes of that Government was Wheatley, who showed considerable parliamentary skill in passing through all its stages a difficult Housing Bill. The Minister of Labour, Thomas Shaw, was the greatest disappointment. Labour had, at the election, raised great hopes that they could bring relief to the unemployed, and even said they had schemes ready to put in hand if only given the opportunity. Time after time in that session we debated unemployment, and I shall never forget the pathetic figure poor Tom Shaw cut when he said in his own defence that he could not produce schemes "like rabbits out of a hat."

But what brought about the downfall of the Government was not this or that Bill or their failure to implement their pledges, but the Campbell case. I find very few people remember what the trouble was all about, and looking back and seeing the incident in perspective, one cannot but think it was a trivial matter to bring down a government.

Campbell was the editor of a Communist paper, *The Workers' Weekly*, and had written a seditious article for which prosecution had been initiated by the responsible authority. Sir Patrick Hastings, who was Attorney General, had ordered withdrawal of the proceedings because, it was suggested, of political pressure. It was alleged by the Conservatives that the matter had been discussed at the Cabinet and that undue pressure had been brought to bear on the Attorney in his legal capacity, by the Government. Anyhow,

it was considered serious enough for the official opposition to put down a censure motion. The Liberals tried to give the Government a reasonable loophole of escape by tabling an amendment to appoint a select committee to inquire into the charge. From what I heard, both from behind the scenes and in the debate, a way out could have been found, and Mr. Asquith was quite sincere in his desire not to make the case a subject of first-class importance. But the Tories smelt blood and were determined to engineer the Government's destruction. Ramsay MacDonald was wounded to the quick at what he regarded as an imputation of his honour and was not ready to yield one iota on the position he had taken up. The Tories skilfully manœuvred for position, decided to vote for the Liberal amendment and encompass the defeat of the Government. I plead guilty to voting with the Government. I heard the debate and was convinced, especially after hearing the Attorney's defence, that though he might not have acted wisely, the charge that there had been tampering with the course of justice had not been made good. At the General Election that followed in 1924, I am satisfied that Labour would have been defeated anyhow. Their short tenure of office had not increased their prestige, but the skilful launching in the Press of the Zinoviev letter finished them off.

I am not yet clear whether that letter was genuine or not, but MacDonald handled the matter clumsily and treated its authenticity as an open question. Curiously enough, this wretched letter not only did harm to Labour, but reacted adversely against the Liberals, frightening many of their supporters into voting Conservative to meet the menace from the "Reds." Anyhow, in 1924 we came back in very reduced numbers and, what was most serious, without Asquith, our leader, who failed to retain Paisley in a straight fight with Labour.

I kept my seat in 1924 in a three-cornered contest, but with only the small margin of 212 over my Labour opponent.

In the House the position was curious. Some of the Liberal members, supporters of the old Lloyd George Coalition, did not want the party to regard themselves as in opposition: they could not get the Coalition germ out of their systems. On the other hand there was a small group of Radicals who were determined to assert their position as an independent opposition, and to assure this we, mainly at the instigation of Wedgwood Benn, formed a Radical group with a small secretariat. Wedgwood Benn knew every move in the parliamentary game, and played it with great skill. I never thought he had much grasp of economics or interested himself in them. But at procedure he was almost a greater adept than the redoubtable Pringle. He just knew when to strike at the Government, when it was wise to press an amendment or withdraw

it, and sometimes even to challenge the ruling of the Chair. He revelled in the game and disarmed his opponents by a cheery smile, and never got ruffled by the jeers of the disciplined Government supporters. I shall never forget one evening, in which I played a prominent part. We had put up strenuous opposition to the safeguarding duties in the Finance Bill and had severely criticised their protectionist character. The Isle of Man is a separate financial entity and every year it is necessary to pass, after our own finance Bill, the Isle of Man Customs Bill, applying separately all new duties we have imposed on ourselves. It is invariably called at the end of business about eleven p.m., and goes through all its stages as a mere formality. Benn saw the opportunity and asked me to take in hand opposition to the Bill. When the Isle of Man Customs Bill was called, instead of it being allowed to slide peacefully through, to the amazement of the Government benches I got up and proceeded to denounce these duties as a wicked imposition. We had lost the American Colonies, I said, by imposing duties on them without the approval of the people, and were we now to alienate the Manx: by no stretch of the imagination could they benefit by these imposts: they had been imposed to help manufacturers in our own island: they had none of these industries to protect: they would suffer by the increased cost of the articles affected and they had not been consulted about these new taxes. Actually I had a very good case to put up and most of the members took it in good part. But Ronald McNeill was then Financial Secretary. He had been Chief of Staff to Carson, was an Ulsterman, an enormous fellow, able, but very heavy of hand with little sense of humour. He was really angry, first, no doubt, at being kept out of bed, and secondly at my argument. "Ah," he said, "the hon. gentleman and his friends lost Ireland to the Empire and now he wishes to lose us the Isle of Man." Of course, Benn backed me up, and we taught the Government that though the Liberals might be few we had a nuisance value.

Besides Benn, the Radical group included Frank Briant, Major Crawford and Kenworthy. Runciman nominally belonged, but did not often come. On occasions Simon looked in, but its activities were mainly concentrated in a half a dozen of us. Our secretariat prepared memoranda on every likely subject and we were, therefore, always well briefed. Anyhow, we did something to establish the position that the Liberals were a free and independent party.

I have already mentioned the Safeguarding Duties. Baldwin felt he was precluded from introducing a general tariff because of the pledges he had made in the 1924 election, but that did not prevent him from using the machinery of the Safeguarding Duties

Act to impose duties to safeguard special industries suffering from unfair competition. Many pressure groups were formed to bring commodities inside the scope of the Act. The Radical group made it their business to keep a watchful eye on all these proposals and we were well prepared with figures and facts to examine and debate every white paper recommending new duties. There were plenty of people organised to fight the interests of the producer, but the unfortunate consumer had no one to look after him, so we made it our business to champion his cause. One afternoon we found no less a person than John Simon to state our case against new duties on china and earthenware which claimed to be suffering from unfair competition. The House meets at 2.45 p.m. and after prayers the rest of the time is allocated to questions which are rarely finished before 3.45, when the House proceeds to the orders of the day. But by mischance the number of questions was well below the average and we finished by 3.30. It had been publicised that Simon was to open but he was not in the precincts. Hutchison, who was the Chief Liberal Whip, had been running round to find him, but he was in Court conducting a case and he could not reach the chamber for another quarter of an hour. "Hutch" rushed up to me, all hot and bothered, and asked me at a minute's notice to deputise. Always ready to step into the breach, I got up and opened the debate amid general cheers, members appreciating what had happened. I have no doubt I was a poor substitute, but under the circumstances I think I did pretty well. By the time I sat down Simon had arrived, and he not unnaturally explained to me how I had missed all the best points. Simon is a strange mixture. I think it is safe to say there is no man with a better brain. He is a master at stating a case and is always able to fortify it with a wealth of quotation which is most impressive. He is a man capable of acts of great generosity, and I have heard of him helping men from whom, by no stretch of the imagination, he could expect any return. But he has not the gift of making friends easily: he is just a little bit too clever and creates an inferiority complex in people who come into contact with him. He wants to be friendly and would like to be popular, but he has in the course of his profession so developed the critical faculty that it does not come natural to him to unbend to the level of the ordinary man. Philip Guedalla once remarked that Simon would one day cut you dead and the next day slap you on the back and call you by the wrong christian name. I have received from him nothing but kindness, and certainly have no personal reason for complaint. But I do think he might have done great things if he had been a little more human and a little less intellectual.

The man who was in charge of these duties was Sir Philip

Cunliffe-Lister, who had recently changed his name from Lloyd-Greame for family reasons. He was an ardent protectionist and used to irritate us by the homilies he addressed to his own supporters as to the errors of our ways. Samuel was once asked by a Liberal member why Cunliffe-Lister found it necessary to repeat his arguments so often, and he wittily replied, "He does it once for Lloyd, once for Greame, once for Cunliffe and once for Lister." He might now add one more for "Swinton," the title he has taken for his peerage.

In the 1924 Government, Winston Churchill made his appearance as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and one of the joys of life was to listen to the debates between him and Snowden. In temperament and character they were poles apart, and Snowden liked nothing better than to spit venom at the new Conservative Chancellor. Snowden had a very bitter tongue and always gave the impression of being a good hater. This was partly due to his physical defects, but he was a man of deep convictions and he was never prepared to compromise with them. In private life he was a very sweet and gentle character.

Perhaps the biggest event in the 1924 to 1929 Parliament was the General Strike which, in 1926, threatened to paralyse the whole organisation of the country. Everything was brought to a standstill and it looked as if London would be brought to the verge of starvation. Some people interpreted it as a real attempt to set up a parallel force to Parliament, and no doubt some hotheads may have had such revolutionary aims in view, but I am satisfied that the majority of the leaders had no other object than to help the sorely tried miners who, owing to conditions quite outside their own control, found themselves faced with the serious lowering of their standard of living almost below subsistence level. I saw another side of the problem. My son, who was then at Cambridge, came up to town with a number of his friends who thoroughly enjoyed themselves running trams and trains or acting as porters, not because they took sides in the dispute but partly from a sense of duty and partly for the fun of the thing.

The strike should have presented a golden opportunity to the Liberals. There is no doubt the ordering of it was a colossal blunder: it failed to achieve anything for the miners and it came to an ignominious end. The Liberals who were not parties to the dispute were in a position not only to have provided a constructive policy but to have given a real lead to the nation. Herbert Samuel, who at the time was outside and not in the House of Commons and was abroad, was brought back and did play some small part in bringing about a settlement. But the only effect of the strike on the Liberal Party was to make a deep fissure. I remember

attending a weekly meeting of the party when it was customary to discuss business. Lloyd George turned up late, but when he came I asked for guidance on our attitude, he ignored my challenge. He caused great chagrin at a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet called by Lord Oxford, when he failed to put in an appearance. I have never been quite clear what was working in the fertile mind of the little Welshman. Some suggested that he saw an opportunity to fish in troubled waters and he did not want to miss it. I think it is fairer to say that he saw the appalling mess the country was in and thought this did present a chance for constructive action. But the other Liberal leaders looked on the General Strike as a threat to the whole constitutional structure. Simon, as a lawyer, challenged its legality though that was open to dispute. I remember being asked to a meeting at Bedford Square, when Asquith consulted a few of us as to what action to take towards L.G., and I came away with the feeling that they were prepared to wound but afraid to strike. L.G. was not going to let them get away with it, and immediately took up the challenge and, on the whole, got the best of the dispute.

The fact was, L.G. was rapidly forgetting his Coalition alignment and was returning to his Radical approach. His instincts were left and he had no use for the old-fashioned Liberalism of his former Liberal associates. The whole industrial and economic life of the country was changing, and it was no use judging problems by standards that were applicable to the beginning of the twentieth century. At L.G.'s instigation a number of committees of inquiry were set up, the two most important of which were those dealing with land and industry respectively. The reports on these two subjects became known as the Green and Yellow Books. The latter, which dealt with Britain's industrial future, was a remarkable document into which an immense amount of work had been put by a number of distinguished economists and experts. Many of its recommendations, which at the time of publication were scoffed at by both Tories and Socialists, have recently been filched by both these parties, twenty years after. That is the tragedy of the Liberal Party: it has the right approach to, and finds the solution of, problems, but it is left to others to take advantage of their research.

The problem of unemployment was becoming a nightmare in the home of every working man. He might be in a good job, but at any moment it might be his turn to stand in the queue at the Labour Exchange or submit to the Means Test before he could draw the dole. The Liberal Yellow Book did make an attempt scientifically to face up to this problem. Lloyd George set out to dramatise this policy in a great campaign to conquer unemployment.

He threw himself into it with characteristic energy and had at his command plenty of money which he had received in his personal capacity when Prime Minister. There is no doubt that he aimed at nothing less than re-establishing the Liberals as one of the great parties in the State with the slogan "We Can Conquer Unemployment." As the election approached, it could almost be said we were a united party: some of the acerbities disappeared and there seemed to be a real promise of success. A full complement of candidates was put up, and these were well supplied with both literature and money. We did get, in 1929, 5,301,127 votes, no mean achievement, but only won fifty-nine seats—only seventeen more than in 1924, when we had less than three million votes. It was all very disappointing. As usual, we fell between stools. Those who were afraid of Labour, voted Tory to keep them out, those who hated the Tories and wanted to make sure of defeating them, voted Labour. The middle party lost to both the right and left. But as in 1923, Liberals were in the position of the balancing force, though this time Labour had more members than the Conservatives, the figures being Labour, 288; Conservatives, 260; Liberals, 59; the total being made up by 8 Independents.

I had a four-cornered fight, Labour, Communist and Conservative parties all putting up candidates.

The *Daily Express* organised what they were pleased to call "The Hustings," to which they invited all candidates to speak on the same platform. I did not think it a good idea, and with my knowledge of Bethnal Green did not think it would succeed there, whatever happened elsewhere. However, the other three candidates accepted the invitation and had I refused to accept, it might have appeared that I was afraid to face the music. The organiser informed me that it was customary at these hustings for the sitting member to speak last, on the grounds that he should have the right to reply to attacks on his conduct as former representative of the constituency. I, personally, thought it would be a distinct advantage if I could speak first, before the meeting had hotted up. The Labour candidate, however, would not agree to my winding up and insisted on a ballot, and to my intense relief I drew first place. The meeting was at Pott Street Hall, and the place was packed to suffocation with representatives of all four parties. I contented myself with an outline of my own policy, and was careful not to attack the other three candidates or their policies. I was listened to in comparative calm. Then came the Tory, who went bald-headed for the two wings of the Labour Party: he was Irish and a good speaker and things began to get lively. He was followed by the official Labour candidate who, instead of going for me and the Tory, concentrated his fire on the Communist, and tempers began

to get frayed. By the time the Communist was on his legs pandemonium prevailed and there was a danger of a free fight. We were all entitled to five minutes each to reply, but when I consulted the others, they had had enough and were willing to waive their rights. It was fortunate that Labour had insisted on a ballot for place and I certainly scored by speaking first instead of last.

The result of the poll was interesting: I received 8,109 votes, Labour was second with 6,849, Communist third with 1,368, and the Tory was last with 1,365. Actually the Tory had put in a lot of hard work and was an excellent speaker, and he was very much disappointed with the result.

The two years of the second Labour Government were full of excitement. The Liberals were in a position almost any day to turn the scales against them, and if we had only acted as a unit our influence would have been immense. As far as I was concerned, I was anxious to give the new Government every chance. Lloyd George too, I believe, was ready to co-operate if the Government would only respond to our approaches. Unemployment overshadowed every other problem. I suppose it was only natural that Ministers resented their dependence on our votes, and once again they were very sensitive to criticism from our quarter of the House. Herbert Samuel, after an absence of eleven years, was back again in the House, and his quiet and patient methods did something to smooth things out. But Lloyd George acted like an irritant to Ramsay MacDonald: perhaps it was because they were both Celts, but it is certain neither had much use for the other. Both over the Coal Bill and the Trades Dispute Amendment Bill, Liberals and Labour were at loggerheads. Lloyd George's chastisement of Ben Turner, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Mines, was a masterpiece of invective, and the poor man never recovered from it. Its very cleverness was resented by the Labour members and it left much bitterness behind it.

But all the Government's troubles did not come from the Liberal side of the House. Ramsay MacDonald had taken a fancy to Oswald Mosley, a comparatively recent recruit to the Labour ranks, and had made him a Minister. If I remember rightly he was put on a committee to deal with unemployment, and could be heard criticising his colleagues in the smoking room. He was a skilful debater and had a good command of language, but I was never attracted to his artificial style of oratory which to me did not ring sincere. But he had a small circle of followers inside the Labour Party who were his devoted admirers, and when he resigned there seemed a real prospect of his providing the party with an alternative leader. In the end, of course, he drifted right away, and finally boxed the compass. He had started as a Conservative, then for a

short time had toyed with the idea of becoming a Liberal, then he joined Labour and left them to start the New Party, and ended up by becoming leader of the Fascists.

There were yet other rebels inside the Labour ranks. The Clyde-side members, led by Maxton, were always causing trouble, and in the end they broke away and formed their own group. The fact is, any progressive movement is bound to have internal differences both as to the speed and direction at which they are to go.

Meanwhile unemployment got steadily worse: so bad, that the Government was becoming nervous. In the spring of 1931, the Prime Minister modified his attitude to Liberal leaders, and discussions took place to see how far we could help them solve some of their problems. Lloyd George, Herbert Samuel and Archie Sinclair met various Ministers and discussed some of the policies we had worked out with the help of economists. There seemed a real prospect of co-operation. I was brought into one of the discussions just before the summer recess. But this co-operation was not at all to the liking of some of our own Liberal colleagues, particularly Sir John Simon who, ever since the General Strike, had drifted more and more to the right. He received unexpected support from Ernest Brown, who had been one of Lloyd George's most devoted henchmen. I have always liked Ernest Brown personally. I admired the way he had forced his way up by his own unaided effort from the very bottom. The son of a Torquay fisherman and an ardent Baptist preacher, he did well in the 1914 war, rising from the ranks and leaving the Army as a lieutenant. The Asquith Liberals took him on as a paid speaker, and at the time of the Black and Tans he did effective work denouncing Lloyd George and his Coalition. He has a tremendous voice and needed no amplifier to make himself heard on the village green. He managed to win Rugby, but he did not retain it. He then transferred his affections to Mr. Lloyd George and joined his staff and did equally effective platform work for him. When Wedgwood Benn left the Liberals in the 1924-29 Parliament he very properly resigned Leith, the seat he had represented in the House of Commons. Labour was strong there, and in the light of the fact that Benn had gone over to them, it was not going to be easy for the Liberals to hold it. Lloyd George picked Brown and gave him his chance, and he made good use of it. Whatever happened he would be sure of a hearing, and no amount of barracking could prevent his voice being heard. Some wag well described him as "Lloyd George's Loud Speaker." Brown was elected, and Lloyd George gave him every chance and he was always being put up to speak. When, therefore, he deserted L.G. for Simon, it was not without significance. What actually happened is common knowledge. Brown, who started his political career as

the critic of coalitions, became the arch coalitionist, and from 1931 to 1945 was member of every Coalition Government in one capacity or another. No one has been more sought after by the Tory candidates as a platform speaker than this erstwhile Radical, and no doubt his name has brought many doubting Liberals into the Tory fold. He served in governments under four Prime Ministers, Ramsay MacDonald, Baldwin, Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, and served them all with equal fidelity in various capacities. The electors in 1945, alas, have brought his victorious progress to an end, but he has been rewarded for his faithful service to so many contradictory causes, and to such a variety of leaders, by being made a Companion of Honour by a grateful country!

In the summer of 1929, I was glad to leave the confused political atmosphere for the sunshine and bracing air of the west coast of France. I have indulged in such a spate of politics that I cannot resist the temptation to pause to recount a little love story. My wife and I stayed at St. Jean de Luz. My brother's second daughter, Joan, a tall, elegant young woman of considerable intelligence, was staying at Paris and asked if she could join us. We got rather bored with the place, its casino and plage, and decided to make a trip to Spain. Joan, however, was young enough to find these pleasures amusing, and we left her behind with friends. After a short tour, we established ourselves at Bagnère de Bigorre, a quiet spot in the Pyrenees. We thought we had been a little unkind to my brother's daughter and telegraphed to her our whereabouts. We regarded her very much as a young lady of fashion and did not think she would exchange the gaieties of the casino for the dullness of a mountain watering-place. She came, most unsuitably dressed, with high-heeled shoes and clothes of the latest Paris fashion. The first day we took her for a walk in the mountains, but it was too much for her, and we having planned a long walk for the second day, she elected to stay behind. The night before, we had noticed in our hotel a fine, well set up young man, having much the appearance of a naval officer. When we arrived back from our walk just before dinner we inquired where the young lady was and were informed she had gone out directly after lunch with a gentleman. Apparently the attractive man we had noticed had asked Joan to permit him to have coffee with her, and then had taken her for a walk in the mountains. It transpired that the young man was a white Russian who had served in Deniken's Army and then had joined the French Foreign Legion, in which he was serving in North Africa. We found him a most attractive man rather of the strong, silent type, but with excellent manners.

Next morning there appeared in the *Daily Mail* the news of the crisis that led to the fall of the Labour Government and the formation

of a National one. I decided to return at once to London, but Joan saw no reason to cut short her holiday, and remained on. A week or two later my brother remarked that he could not make out what his daughter was up to. All she said in her letters was that she liked the mountain air and was learning to play chess. She became engaged, and for a whole year corresponded with her officer of the Foreign Legion. Finally, I went over to Paris to act as witness at their most attractive wedding. Her marriage was a great success. Her husband was posted to various places in Africa and she accompanied him everywhere. They had three delightful children and he made a model husband to whom his wife was devoted. Alas, he was posted to Indo-China just before the war. When the danger of war was imminent, my son asked Joan to join him in New Zealand but she refused to leave her husband, and for four years she was completely cut off from the outside world.

Back in London I found everything hustle and excitement. There was certainly a crisis and a serious one. Before we knew where we were the Labour Government had disappeared and had been replaced by a National one. It was all done very quickly and smoothly, but whether the change was necessary will always be open to question. But something drastic had to be done to restore credit and establish confidence. Apparently neither the Prime Minister nor his Chancellor of the Exchequer had confidence that their colleagues would co-operate in passing through the unpopular measures necessary. R. G. Hawtrey, in his book, *Economic Destiny*, published in 1944, and therefore long enough after the crisis to write dispassionately, says: "The series of financial crises began in Austria with the failure of the Credit Anstalt, in May, 1931; it spread to Germany in June, causing a complete paralysis of banking business and a default in the country's external liabilities, and in July the contagion reached England. In England there was no banking crisis; the banks were strong enough to bear the strain and there was no loss of confidence in them. But there was a monetary crisis, a loss of confidence in the maintenance of the value of the pound sterling. Even before the world depression supervened, British industry had been in difficulties. The price level prevailing after the return to the gold standard in 1925 was too low relatively to the wage level, wages resisted reduction and unemployment continued. The sudden fall in the world price level after 1929 was still met by no considerable reduction of wages, and unemployment grew rapidly to an unprecedented figure. The figure of unemployment imposed enormous charges on the budget, while depression seriously diminished the yield of revenue. Drastic increases in taxation failed to balance the budget. At the same time the competitive power of the export industries was gravely impaired by the high wage

level relatively to the world price level. In these various ways the economic system of the country was being subjected to a strain that seemed to become intolerable."

Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden and J. H. Thomas, remained in the new combination, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and Cunliffe-Lister came in to represent the Tories. Herbert Samuel, Lord Reading and Donald MacLean were there for the Liberals, to mention only the leading figures. Lloyd George was lying on a sick bed, recovering from a serious operation. It was seriously suggested that Ramsay MacDonald seized the opportunity to engineer the crisis at a time when the little Welshman was out of the running and unable to play a part. Anyhow, one thing is certain, the Liberal leader found it very galling to be out of the picture. Samuel kept him informed and consulted him at every turn, and no Liberal was appointed, even to a junior post, without his approval. The rank and file, summoned to a meeting at the National Liberal Club, were given an outline of the events that had led to the formation of the Government. I stood up in the body of the hall and gave the Liberal Ministers my blessing. When the junior posts came to be filled, I thought my claims might have been considered. I had had considerable administrative experience both in business and in local government, and the success I had met with during the war running the Volunteers convinced me that I had the capacity to deal with officials. However, most M.P.s feel they ought to be considered for government jobs, and I could comfort myself with the fact that the best men do not always get them. I was approached by Herbert Samuel and Archie Sinclair and asked if I would agree to be Chief Whip, as they both felt I was the right man. But I had no fancy for the job, which was the very last one I wanted. They pressed me strongly to accept it, and I consented provided there was a unanimous desire on the part of the party that I should be appointed. I found, however, that Major Owen very much wanted it and I was therefore only too glad to withdraw in his favour.

I think the position of Chief Whip is the most thankless task a man can undertake, but particularly in the Liberal Party. This was the third time it had been offered me. In 1935 it was again offered and this time I succumbed because there was no other suitable person available, and I occupied the post for ten years, and hard labour it was. But I am going a little fast.

The new Government in its original form had not long to live. The House of Commons was a honeycomb of intrigue. First Ramsay MacDonald was faced with bitter opposition from his erstwhile friends, who felt they had been betrayed: nothing was too bitter for them to say against their old leader to whom they had

been devoted, and this applied especially to his old ministerial colleagues. Secondly, Neville Chamberlain was not going to let the grass grow under his feet. He saw his opportunity both to destroy Labour and to establish Tariff Reform, of which policy he was a devoted adherent. I say Chamberlain and not Baldwin because the latter was passive and I have no doubt would willingly have carried on, without pressing the issue. Liberals, too, had more than their dose of intrigue. Simon, Ernest Brown, Hore-Belisha, all felt they had claims for office and that they had been wrongly left out in the cold.

Hore-Belisha played a leading part and ran round collecting signatures to a memorandum swearing fealty to the Prime Minister, and more or less promising to follow him, right or wrong. I was approached but refused to have anything to do with it, but one or two others appended their signatures only to withdraw them when they appreciated the intention of the organisers.

Belisha is a strange person with a curious mixture of qualities. His handicap as a politician is that he has no fixed political creed. When I am asked by ambitious young men anxious to enter political life what they should do, I always reply, "Make up your mind what you really believe in. Without convictions you cannot influence others, without principles you will be like a ship without a rudder and inevitably one day you will run on the rocks with not even the satisfaction of having done something useful."

Hore-Belisha is a good speaker, quick-witted and always ready with an argument. He is capable of putting in a lot of hard work, but in patches. When he sat with the Liberals, sometimes he would not turn up for days and then would suddenly appear and with considerable skill cut into a debate with a slashing attack.

For a long time he wrote for the *Evening Standard*, and this led to an unfortunate incident. Like other parties, the Liberals had a weekly meeting and somehow or other, almost before it was over, the purport of the discussion would leak out and appear in the *Evening Standard*. I am quite satisfied Belisha had nothing to do with this leakage but, not unnaturally, because of his intimate association with that paper, he was a bit suspect.

There was a great meeting at the Kingsway Hall, to discuss land policy. Pringle was speaking in his rather vitriolic style when Hore-Belisha arrived. Pringle insinuated that here was the betrayer of secrets. Belisha promptly retaliated by smacking the unfortunate Pringle on the face, a blow that echoed right through the hall. The whole business was most unfortunate and added to the credit of neither of the parties concerned. Hore-Belisha has climbed high since then and occupied many posts of importance. He is still young and his career is by no means finished. He started

as an ardent Radical, then became a leading figure in the Liberal National group, practically its founder, left them and became an Independent, and now is a Conservative. No doubt his conversion in each case has been sincere and altruistic, but it will be interesting to watch his career to a finish. I am afraid I am old-fashioned and believe in the loyalties and a certain amount of consistency, but I know I am out of date and in these fast-moving times it is considered a mistake to cling to beliefs.

But all these intrigues made a General Election inevitable. It was too good an opportunity for the Tories to miss, and they are masters at tactics. Liberals had a meeting upstairs when there were charges and counter-charges. I remember saying to my old friend Sir Robert Hamilton that this was no place for honest men, and he and I walked out in disgust.

The result of the General Election of 1931 was a sweeping victory for the National Government. Labour lost over 200 seats and was reduced to a party of only fifty-two. All their Ministers of Cabinet rank were defeated except George Lansbury and Clem Attlee. Surprise is often expressed that Attlee reached so easily the leadership of his party, but the simple explanation is that his colleagues went down like ninepins in 1931 but he survived and became deputy leader, with a claim to the succession to the chief post.

Lansbury was a lovable person and always had the courage of his opinions. He was a great believer in Women's Suffrage, and as a demonstration in its favour he resigned his seat and sought re-election, and was soundly defeated. That did not deter him and he went on with his propaganda. Poplar, where he lived and worked, was always in his thoughts and influenced all his actions. I cannot recollect what the occasion was but he was sent to prison because of some breach of the law. I met him at Victoria Station, when I was going to Paris with my wife. "George," I said, "I thought you were in jail." The answer came pat, "Of course I am, but I'm out on ticket-of-leave." He shared a carriage with us and whenever anyone tried to get in he simply pushed his head out and said they could not come in as he was a prisoner on ticket-of-leave, and it may sound very selfish but we did keep the carriage to ourselves and I never enjoyed a journey more. He was full of gaiety and fun, but I never met a man more sincere in his convictions. He was never a prig and was a great-hearted and generous soul who understood and cared for his fellow-man.

In those difficult days after 1931, he led his party with courage and tenacity. But he could not stomach war in any shape or form and when his colleagues felt that rearming was inevitable, he resigned and made over the leadership to Clem Attlee.

On one occasion he came to speak for my Labour opponent in

Bethnal Green, and when someone asked what he thought about Percy Harris, he promptly replied that he would not say a word against me, that I was a good friend of his, that he admired my work on the L.C.C., and that the only fault he could find in me was that I was not a member of the Labour Party. That was characteristic of the man: he was incapable of a mean or ungenerous act, though at times he did allow his heart to govern his head.

The Liberals would not have fared so badly at the election they had not been divided into two camps; one might have said three. The followers of Samuel supported the emergency government but adhered to Free Trade; the group led by Simon were ready to throw over Free Trade and give a free hand to the new combination: Lloyd George had a third section composed of himself, his son, his daughter, and Major Owen: he thought the General Election should never have been held and refused to compromise with the National Government on any point.

The strangest member of the Simon group was my friend Walter Runciman. Only a few weeks before, he had nailed his Free Trade principles to the mast and emphasised his hostility to tariffs. In the face of this, I must admit I was astonished to find him accepting, of all positions, the Presidency of the Board of Trade. The Tories were clamouring for tariffs and the issue would have to be faced squarely before long, and their majority was large enough to enable them to demand action.

One day, shortly after the opening of the new Parliament, I met Sir Frederick Hall, who was then M.P. for Dulwich, walking upstairs to the Committee Room floor. He asked me if I was coming to the Runciman meeting, and I explained that I knew nothing about it, but he said I was entitled to come and almost pushed me in. The room was packed, mostly with Tories, and all I could do was to find a corner on the platform. I was told afterwards a note was sent to the chairman protesting against my presence, but I was quite oblivious to the objection. Runciman made a first class free trade speech on the iron and steel industry, to consider which, the meeting had been specially summoned. He proceeded to put an unanswerable case, as I thought, against taxing raw materials, pointing out what a variety of articles came within the definition of iron and steel, how they were the essential raw materials of two great basic industries, viz., shipbuilding and heavy engineering, and that far more people were dependent on those secondary industries than the primary ones. I met him afterwards in the smoking-room and he smilingly remarked that he had seen me out of the corner of his eye approving his speech. But eventually he succumbed and before the end of that Parliament he swallowed tariff duties, imperial preference, iron and steel duties and all, without apparently turning

a hair. I can only assume that he had learnt the error of his ways and that his was a case of complete conversion.

I met him in Whitehall on the Friday before the outbreak of the 1939 war. He walked across and said pathetically that he had been through two great wars and could not face a third. He looked a sick man and strangely tired. I never felt he was really happy in the National Government, though he remained a member for so many years.

I do not intend to write about the position of the Liberal Free Trade members of the National Government—Samuel has written about it in his excellent memoirs—except to say as a back bencher that I thought the “agreement to differ” was an impossible proposition. To hear two Ministers belonging to the same Government arguing against each other on a fundamental issue like tariffs, and from the same front bench, was farcical and simply would not work. As it was it did not last for long and I only hope a similar experiment will not be tried again. It was bound to break down before long and I am sure it did not strengthen our position in the country. When the Liberals did withdraw from the Government there was a sigh of relief among Liberals throughout the land. I am satisfied they had remained in the Government out of a sense of duty, but as tariffs are such a fundamental issue it was necessary for our leaders to be in the forefront of the battle against them.

I have been turning over the pages of the *Parliamentary Debates* during the last few days, and I am appalled at the number of speeches I made in the 1931-35 Parliament, and the wealth of knowledge I displayed. I was never in the habit of speaking from briefs and dug out myself the facts and figures on which I built my speeches. Speeches outside the House depend for their effect on generalisations. But in the House of Commons, in addition to the Minister you may be criticising, or whose Bill you may be examining, there is certain to be some member who is an expert on the subject being debated who is invariably able to put you right if you make a false statement. Even if the speech escapes correction at the time, every word is taken down in shorthand and is printed in *Hansard* the next day and will be carefully scrutinised by the interest concerned. I talked on an immense range of subjects. Whenever the Whips had difficulty in finding a speaker to deal with a subject or move an amendment, they fell back on me. Perhaps I was too willing a horse, and they drove me hard. On all the taxes imposed under the Import Duties Acts I invariably took a hand, and looking through these dusty blue volumes, which I have pulled out of the cupboards where they have rested untouched for many years, I am astonished at both the knowledge I displayed and the amount of work I must have put in. But my efforts were by no means

confined to attacking the new Protection. I spoke on unemployment, the means test, housing and town planning, and almost every subject that lent itself to debate. I specialised on education, having for many years been convener of the Liberal Education Advisory Committee, which I formed at the request of Mr. Asquith as far back as 1923. I brought together a number of distinguished educationalists, University professors, heads of both the public schools and state schools, elementary and secondary, and whenever a new departure in education was made, I used to call them together and seek their advice. Originally Sir Robert Blair was chairman, but when he retired, the members of the committee asked me to act in his place. Though the members were all Liberals they mostly preferred to remain anonymous, as it might make it difficult for them either with their local authorities or their governors.

I invariably spoke on the Education Estimates, and as Ministers of Education were constantly changing and few of them stayed for any length of time in this Department, I had more continuous knowledge than most of them.

I sometimes wonder whether all this parliamentary work was worth while. I did take my duties seriously, attended debates, often sitting late at night, studied blue books and white papers, drafted amendments and prepared speeches. I suppose someone has to do this work or the parliamentary machine would not function. But I was never given the opportunity to exercise the skill and knowledge I acquired, as a Minister of the Crown. I have seen young men with very little parliamentary experience, without serving a long apprenticeship and with no special qualification, get on to the Treasury Bench. Even with the advantage of having a departmental machine behind them to write their speeches and prepare their briefs, they have not exhibited any great gifts. I am not complaining, but I wonder whether all my hard work was justified by the results. Certainly the public knows little about the work of private members. These days the Press are sparing in their reports and the only chance a member has of any publicity is to get involved in a scene which will give him headlines, the kind of publicity I have never sought. When it comes to an election, too, I am afraid work in the House of Commons counts very little.

A member who rarely speaks in the House but is always visiting his constituency, opening bazaars, or attending to their personal grievances, receives far more appreciation than another who may be assiduous in discharging his parliamentary duties and fighting the people's battle on the floor of the House. My friend Commander King-Hall has formed a Hansard Society to encourage the reading of the *Parliamentary Debates* and to increase their sale. I do think the nation wants to become more conscious of what does go on in

Parliament. I am amazed at the crass ignorance, even amongst educated people, of the procedure and work of the House of Commons. When I was on the committee to consider the rebuilding of the bomb-destroyed chamber, I urged that more accommodation should be provided for the public, so that visitors should have greater opportunity to hear debates. Some members of the committee were actively opposed to the idea. Some additional gallery accommodation is being provided, but it is totally inadequate. In New Zealand there is a special wave-length for the reporting of parliamentary debates, and I am assured that the public does take advantage of it. I have always opposed the idea because I feared it might change the tone and temper of the debates. At present, members speak across the floor to each other, and try to persuade by their arguments those on the opposite side to accept their views, and it is a mistake to think that members are impervious to argument and Ministers never listen to reason. But if speeches were broadcast there would be a real danger that many members, instead of debating with each other, would seize the opportunity of catching the Speaker's eye, just to disclaim to a greater public outside and to their constituents in particular. Here I want to digress for a space.

It must not be thought that all my time was devoted to my parliamentary duties. In the recess I made many journeys. Twice I went to Greece. I visited Madeira, various parts of France and many other places, but three tours I do think worth recording.

Before the Nazis established themselves in power, I made an interesting investigation into education in Germany. I visited Hamburg, Leipzig and Nuremburg. I had conducted a German professor round some of our London schools, at the request of the Board of Education, and he invited me to visit him at Hanover. I must confess I was immensely impressed with what I saw. The elementary schools were on a much larger scale than ours, and instead of being adjacent to the children's homes, in the towns they were centralised and children were given travel vouchers. They were run very much more as a business organisation and the headmaster was provided with a proper office staff from which he administered boys', girls' and infants' departments. There was much more use of men teachers and I saw them taking what we would regard as infants' classes. What we would call higher elementary or central schools were very highly developed. The buildings were good and, in most cases, the amenities such as a gymnasium and swimming baths were excellent. I inquired if the taxpayer, especially the wealthier ones, did not object to all this spending of public money on education, and I was assured that it was the well-to-do who insisted that good buildings were provided. As far as I could find out, it was the general practice for all classes, as in the U.S.A., to send their

children to the common school, and they therefore made it their business to see that they were well found and they did not grudge money for that purpose. I took the opportunity to study the whole of their municipal government and was immensely impressed by their efficiency and orderliness. I remarked to the Burgomaster at Nuremburg that I never saw paper littering the streets or parks. He replied it was "verboten," and seemed to think that was final and nothing more need be said. Everything was organised from childhood upwards, and this was before the era of Hitler.

Psychological tests were made of a child's aptitude before leaving school, and he was not allowed to enter certain trades if the tests showed he was not suitable: but it did not end there, these records were checked from his employment cards as he moved from one employment to another.

I must say I was impressed with what I saw, and if education alone should have enabled the German people to resist pernicious propaganda, they ought to have reacted differently to the Nazi germ. There is something in the German people that makes them like regimentation: they like to be ordered about and told what to do. Culture they certainly have. The knowledge of good music is general. In the ordinary schools the children learn classical music and understand it. At Leipzig I went to a Bach concert in a big church: it was packed with ordinary folk and nearly everyone had the score in his hands.

I write at length because I do think the impression I received is worth recording.

But a very different experience was the journey I made to Russia in 1934. Four friends of mine, J. B. Hobman, formerly editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, J. B. Morel, then chairman of Rowntrees, and his son, a Cambridge undergraduate, and John Rogers, a publicity agent, asked me to join them in a visit to the U.S.S.R.

I boarded a small steamer, flying the Hammer and Sickle, at a dock just below London Bridge. It was an amusing journey out. The steamer on the whole was well found. They had women amongst the crew, there were only a few of them but they took their turn in the ordinary routine of the ship. Both the ship going out and the one coming in had a Lenin Corner, which was a kind of sanctuary with Soviet literature, where the crew when off duty could be quiet and study the philosophy of the creed. It had a small bust of Lenin in it, and when I was in Russia these corners were very general. Just as in Catholic countries you have a Crucifix or a picture of the Virgin Mary, so in Russia Lenin had become something of a sacred figure. I hear Stalin these days has become almost as much a symbol as Lenin. There were several

amenities provided such as hot showers, but they had a way of not working and being out of order, a characteristic noticeable wherever we stayed in Russia. That was eleven years ago, and I have no doubt it is very different to-day.

Somehow or other, when our ship steamed alongside the wharf at Leningrad I did feel I was approaching another world. We were fortunate in picking up on board a Russian-speaking Englishman, and he remained with us throughout our tour. The language difficulty is a serious one and an official interpreter does not get over it. When we landed and went through the customs there was not the search for dutiable goods that is usual on entering a foreign country. They did not ask us whether we had any cigarettes, brandy or silks, the only thing they were interested in was printed matter. Every book, paper or document they scrutinised with the greatest care. A copy of *Punch* especially intrigued them, and they examined every page carefully to see if there was any propaganda which might contaminate their people. I have never been in any country so completely divorced from the outside world.

Wherever we went we found the people friendly and interested in us, but completely ignorant of Britain and its people, except what they learned from distorted literature about the wicked capitalist countries. Propaganda was always at work and never ceased. It was like living in a perpetual General Election. An American journalist wittily described it "propaganda for proper geese."

In democratic countries with a free Press and free Parliament, it is difficult to visualise a country with only one party and a Press all of one colour. In Moscow we were told of a mythical young Communist who had dared to criticise the powers that be, and was brought before the all-powerful Stalin. He is supposed to have said: "Young man, don't think; if you think, don't write; if you write, don't print; if you print, don't publish; if you publish, deny it the next day." Quite untrue but nevertheless symbolic of the absence of freedom.

When we were in Leningrad they were making an experiment in a revolving seventh day, so that the factories should be working continuously—in other words, a staggered Sunday. It did not work. A man would find his lady friend was working on a different day from himself. They could not arrange to meet the families and friends, and I believe the idea was abandoned.

We were very much shepherded and all our days were carefully planned for us, and it was difficult to break away and see things for ourselves. Picture galleries, royal palaces, museums galore were shown to us, but factories were difficult to enter. Morel, naturally, wanted to see a chocolate factory; they were ready to show us the

outside but reluctant for us to enter. Perhaps it is different to-day, but I am recording my experiences. There is no class recognised on the trains but there is a hard and soft class, and it was decided that my age justified my travelling soft which is equivalent to, or only another name for, first.

The main street in Leningrad in 1934 was dull and drab. Relics of the old régime still remained in the shop windows, but most of them contained nothing inside. But never has a complete revolution taken place with so little material damage. The palaces and churches were almost untouched, and the Bolsheviks in many cases left everything as it was under the old régime. Most of the churches had been turned into museums and carefully preserved, but caricatures of foreign politicians, such as L.G. and Churchill, were shown, as well as effigies of priests and other reactionaries. Some churches did remain open for services, but the priests were poorly paid and dependent on the pence of the poor. I assume under the new dispensation this is all changed and the Church is coming into its own again. Moscow was much brighter and with fewer traces of the revolution. One of the most impressive sights in the world is the Kremlin, both the fortress itself and its position, especially when floodlit and Lenin's tomb blends with its environment. I don't know if it still goes on but when I was there there was a perpetual procession of peasants before the embalmed remains of the maker of the revolution, many of them crossing themselves as they passed his body. The fact is, mankind must have some symbol to worship. If they are not allowed a God, they make a graven image. Stalin has been clever enough to recognise this, and during the war has restored the official status of the Church.

Great point was made in taking us to see model schools, crèches, hospitals and prisons. I was impressed by the enthusiasm that created them, but eleven years ago they did not compare favourably with similar institutions in London and in the great towns. Children in the schools would not believe there was anything of the kind in capitalist countries.

The opera was magnificent; it was maintained in the undiminished splendour of Czarist days, even to the parade in the foyer between the acts. Instead of the aristocrats and princes, commissars and young Bolsheviks strutted about in top boots and smartly cut blouses. On one occasion when we would not board an overcrowded tram, we hired an old-fashioned drosky, driven by the typical Russian of Chekov, with a wild, unkempt beard—and he charged us through the nose. This was one of the few remaining examples of private enterprise, and we had to pay for it.

We went by train in a sleeping car in luxury from Moscow to Nijni-Novgorod, nearby which was a large factory making Ford

cars, which we were allowed to see from the outside but not to enter. Novgorod we found a depressing place and we were disappointed with it, especially as most of us associated it with the world-famous fair. Here we were to catch a steamer down the Volga, and we might have to wait twenty-four hours, but we were fortunate enough to catch the boat of the day before. We were warned not to take off our clothes or put out our lights because the cabins were infested with insect life. We were a day on board, and saw the life of the peasants who were getting on and off the boat at the various stopping places, and they gave me the impression of having been little affected by the economic upheaval. It wants more than a revolution to change the eternal character of the peasant.

We left the Volga and went by a slow, dismal train to Ivanovo, the great textile centre. We had not slept the previous night and a meal was not forthcoming, but we were borne up by the promise of a modern luxury hotel at our journey's end. It was modern, but not luxurious. The hall was crowded with navvies who had been working on the roads and there was nowhere for us to sit. We were shown into a bare, dank room, all glass on one side with no curtains, and half a dozen iron bedsteads with red blankets but no sheets, less attractive than the worst type of workhouse ward. The washing arrangements were primitive, running water with no basins, and both men and women had to use the same open lavatory. I make no complaint but just record what I found. No doubt they are very different to-day. The textile factory we went over had a lot of Lancashire machinery, but they made very few varieties of clothes and, of course, the Russians had to wear whatever was given them: there was little choice in those days.

We were promised luxury on our return journey. After waiting an hour or two at a cold, draughty station, on an autumn morning, a train drew up at the platform. Dozens of men and women porters boarded the train and proceeded to brush and wash it out, but when we did get in, our carriage could by no stretch of imagination be called clean. We had been promised a dining-car, but for some reason or other it never appeared. Fortunately the wisdom of our guide had provided us with a kettle, and we had to be content with tea on our twenty-four hours' journey back to Leningrad. The carriage had no windows and there was a constant tramp of people in and out of the carriage as they got off and on the train at the numerous stopping places. But I enjoyed the experience; it gave me an insight into the ways and habits of the people that a luxury train could not provide.

The people were always friendly and full of curiosity. In those days nothing worked, the plug in the lavatories did not pull, the

windows either did not open or did not shut, the trains were always late. The only thing that was always good was tea.

When the Russians came into the war, I doubted if their transport would work. Their permanent way, their rolling stock and their engines, when I was there, were all unsatisfactory. I have no doubt the Germans thought the same: that is why they attacked. But the indomitable will of the Russian overcame all obstacles. The Russian is nearer Nature than the Western European, and he can improvise and is able to succeed with the second best in a way that a more sophisticated people could not manage. I am told the Americans would not make a move in the war until everything was at hand, from typewriters to ice-water. They succeeded through perfect efficiency. The Russians move on for the very other reason, that they never have had gadgets and could therefore adapt themselves to any conditions and had not to wait for supplies.

One of the difficulties of judging Russia is to disentangle what is due to the Slav character and what to Communism. Much of what we both liked and disliked existed long before Bolshevism. The Russian is an Eastern European, half Oriental, with much of the philosophy and patience of the East. I am glad I made that visit. It is always dangerous to generalise from a few weeks' visit to a country, especially a vast country like Russia, the fringe of which we only touched. But even if you have only made a short visit to a country, you are better able to understand what you read about it than if you had never been there at all. The serious part of the Russian experiment is the way they have up to now discouraged contact with the outside world. That was significant when I was there, and I am assured by reliable authorities that it is still so to-day.

I don't see how they will be able to keep up the embargo, and it is reasonable to assume the powers that be will now feel strong enough to relax it. No doubt we can learn something from them, and I am sure they can learn something from us. I would like to see a free exchange of visits between the peoples of the two countries, not shepherded, but permitted to move freely.

Above all, we must learn each other's language. Here we are far more guilty than they are. It is quite a rare thing to find a Britisher who can speak Russian, while English is extensively taught in the U.S.S.R.

In the following year, 1935, I was to make a very different kind of journey. All looked comparatively peaceful when the House adjourned for the summer recess. Then appeared on the horizon a cloud the size of a man's hand. No one in Britain was taking much interest in Abyssinia except the experts in the Foreign Office.

We read in the Press that trouble was brewing there, but that had little significance for the man in the street, who thought of it as a barbarous country where they were always having tribal wars. Little did he realise that there the seeds were being sown out of which would grow World War Number Two. The village of Wall Wall is not marked on most maps, but when the Italians exploited an incident there, to work up a quarrel with the Abyssinian Emperor, it became clear to me a serious position was likely to develop. Abyssinia was a member of the League of Nations, and her Emperor wisely decided to refer the dispute to the Assembly that was meeting that September. I had had my summer holiday, but I remember saying to my wife that this would be the real test of the effectiveness of the League: if it should fail another war would be inevitable. I therefore decided to go to Geneva forthwith and see the League in session and watch how it dealt with the situation. I went to Cooks and asked how I was to get there in time, and was advised to take a plane. I had never done any flying, and though it sounds absurd these days, my wife regarded it as a somewhat dangerous adventure, and insisted on my son driving me down to Croydon to see me off. As it turned out, it was not without risk. We had not been up for long before the plane appeared to be making for a hill, though I could see the English Channel glistening in the distance. It was a French plane and there was a rushing to and fro that indicated that something was afoot. I asked the conductor if there was anything wrong and received the encouraging reply that everything was wrong and the petrol tank was leaking and we were going to make a forced landing. We came down at Lympne Aerodrome quite safely, but had to stay there a couple of hours until a relief plane came and took us to Paris, where we were informed we had missed the connection to Lyons. However, a special plane was put on and we proceeded on our journey. When we had been flying for some time I noticed that the earth was completely disappearing from sight and I timidly asked a fellow passenger if we were not flying too high. He replied that he had often made the journey, but never remembered flying so high before. So he put his head into the pilot's cabin and asked the reason for this high altitude, and received the explanation that he had never made this trip before, and was flying high as a precaution! However, we made Lyons safely, where we again found we had missed our connection. We therefore remained with our inexperienced pilot, but made a magnificent flight over the Jura, and in brilliant sunshine descended smoothly and safely into the lovely Geneva valley.

Geneva was packed to overflowing. Fortunately, John Harris, familiarly known as Aboriginy Harris because of his secretaryship

of the Anti-Slavery Society, had booked me a room at an evangelical hotel opposite the station, where apostles of a variety of movements were accustomed to stay. I had been to a meeting of the League before and I never found anywhere, not even the Lobby of the House of Commons, such a place for gossip. And the Wall Wall incident just provided the kind of subject that lent itself to rumour. The Peace Palace was not finished and the Council was still meeting at the Grand Hotel, on the Quay, and though I had applied to the Foreign Office for a pass before leaving London, I had the greatest difficulty in finding a seat, but managed somehow through a friend to squeeze in. Sam Hoare, then Foreign Secretary, was not there, but Anthony Eden was in his place, but what impressed itself most on my mind was the sinister figure of Laval. Anyone who looked more like a villain I cannot imagine: it was written all over him. Had he been made up for the part he could not have looked it better. Everywhere I went I was told to watch Laval, and that he would certainly sell the pass. No one trusted him and I cannot think what the Foreign Office was about to go so far with him.

The proceedings at the Council were impressive in their simplicity, quite informal and conversational, and it was hard to believe that here was a Cabinet of the Nations dealing with vital international problems with the whole world listening in. When Martin, the Ethiopian delegate, proceeded to argue his case, Signor Grandi, the Italian delegate, deliberately walked out.

I know it is the fashion now to decry the League of Nations and scoff at its machinery. I don't accept that view at all. On the contrary, even by 1935 a very good organisation had been built up: what was wrong with it was the human personalities who were running it. We may substitute the United Nations for the League, provide it with a brand new constitution and even powers to enforce its decisions, but if those who are running it have not faith in it as an instrument of peace, it will be no more effective in maintaining peace than its predecessor. When everything went in their favour, nations accepted the League's decrees, but as soon as it went against Great Powers they rebelled, and in turn Japan, Germany and Italy withdrew their support.

I watched the proceedings in 1935 most carefully. No one can say the Council did not handle the Abyssinian affair skilfully. On the contrary, it could not have been fairer or more dignified in a British court of justice.

Nothing was much wrong, either, with the meeting of the Assembly, which was held in a great hall in the town.

By then Sam Hoare had arrived, and when he expressed the determination of the British Government to be loyal to the League and use its machinery of Sanctions to enforce its decision, it received

general acclamation. But the British Government ran away from its publicly expressed intention. That killed the League: it never survived the shock. But what is to prevent any one of the Great Powers repeating that action under the new international organisation? If a dispute is brought before the Council for settlement, in which a Great Power is involved, or even if it is not itself involved, and it decided to veto action, a situation is likely to arise as bad, or even worse than, the autumn of 1935, when Sanctions broke down. I am absolutely convinced there is no hope for mankind except we can build up an effective international organisation to enforce peace, but let it, at any rate, be on firm foundations which will stand the effect of blast. This must involve some surrender of absolute sovereignty, not only by small nations but by all alike, great as well as small. What nation is going to disarm so long as a Great Power can claim it is above the law and can insist on immunity when only its interests are involved?

I made another visit to Geneva after the completion of the great Peace Palace. Though there may be a criticism of its elevation, there can be none of its situation, high up on a hill above the lake and surrounded by a beautiful park. The planning of its interior is perfect for its purpose, and every convenience is provided for its members and the Press. Will the new world organisation abandon this home, all ready for its use? Switzerland did remain neutral effectively throughout two great wars, and I cannot imagine a more suitable headquarters for a peace organisation. It will be interesting to watch events. Uno may yet decide that Switzerland is more convenient than the U.S.A.

Whenever I visited Geneva I called in at the International Labour Office. Whatever critics of the League might have to say, not one can find fault with the industrial side. The office was well run, there was goodwill among the staff drawn from all nations, and I am satisfied it achieved useful constructive work. I devoutly hope the accumulated knowledge and experience gained will not be scrapped, and the I.L.O. will be embodied as part of the work of the United Nations.

My journey back from Geneva to London was speedy and uneventful. I left the hotel at 11 a.m. and was back in my Westminster flat by 4.20 p.m. for tea. To-day, no doubt, the journey could be done in even less time.

While I was in Geneva I met many people who had recently been in Germany or were in close touch with it, and all testified to the appalling horrors of the Hitler régime, which was closing its grip on both the social and economic life of that country. Specially interesting was the evidence of the American consul, who was constantly being asked to give visas to persons who were anxious to

escape and who were in fear of their lives. His duty was to check the information given him, and he told me that he found the complaints of persecution were not a bit exaggerated. The outlook for Europe looked none too good, but I felt cheered by the firm line taken by our Foreign Secretary at the League Assembly.

I was over-optimistic: Sir Samuel Hoare was not to live up to his professions.

The General Election of 1935 was a strange one. All three of the great parties supported the policy of Sanctions to implement the decision of the League of Nations. But the Government made a special appeal for the authority of a large majority to strengthen its hands in carrying through Sanctions to a successful conclusion.

The Liberals vigorously protested, without avail, against this exploitation of a delicate international situation for the purpose of an election. The dice was heavily loaded against us and we fared badly. I had a hotly contested election. My opponent was a lively young Socialist who had been recently Mayor of Shoreditch, but I don't think he helped himself by making personal attacks on me. I was fortunate in having a lot of keen young local men and women to help me, and they worked like Trojans. Alas, in 1945, they were all absent in one or other of the Services, and I sadly missed them.

I got in by the significant majority of 1,066, which greatly pleased my supporters, who marched through the streets chanting "1066 and all that." But it is time to start a new chapter with the opening of a new Parliament, the life of which was to synchronise with great and tragic events.

CHAPTER IX

CHIEF WHIP

THE election of 1935 played havoc with the Liberal Party. To begin with we had only put up 154 candidates, and that alone was a serious handicap, while the Government had stolen our thunder by making the League of Nations and sanctions the chief plank in their programme.

Herbert Samuel, our leader, was beaten, so was Isaac Foot and the two whips, Harcourt Johnstone and Walter Rea. I found myself the only member of my party in London who had survived the election. The two whips had no status, and they asked me to explore the position in the House, and to find out where we were to sit and to establish our rights. The first thing I heard was that

Simon had put in a claim to the Whips' Room, off the inner lobby, on the grounds that his group contained more members than our wing of the Liberal Party. This was a serious matter, though to the outsider it sounds of little consequence. A party in the House of Commons can only function as a separate entity if it has guidance. Often in a long and controversial bill there are numerous amendments and divisions: members cannot be in the debating chamber all day, and it is the duty of the whips to advise members of their party, and keep them informed of all that is going on, and to shepherd them into the right lobby.

The Simonites, i.e., the followers of Sir John Simon, were pledged to support the Government, and would therefore be guided by its whips, whereas we were an independent entity. I, therefore, went to see both the Speaker and the First Commissioner of Works, who were more or less the persons to judge. I found that Simon had already put in his claim, but the decision went in our favour. I was, however, only just in time: another day, and the Liberal Nationals would have had possession and it would have been difficult to evict them.

Our first duty was to find a new chairman of the Parliamentary Party. Sir Archibald Sinclair was the obvious choice. He had been a cabinet minister, and he was generally popular, both with "the House" and his own party. Lloyd George had, in the last Parliament, led his own small family group of four and kept aloof from the official party. I managed to persuade him to come to our first meeting, but he made it clear he was not a candidate for the chairmanship, though he presided and moved the election of Sinclair. This was a good beginning for the depleted ranks of the party. L.G. was a host in himself and worth a dozen smaller fry. Sinclair invited me to become Chief Whip: I suggested Graham White but he would not look at it: there was no one else with the necessary experience and I had no alternative but to accept. It was the very last job I ever wanted, as it seriously interfered with my independence and my freedom to express my own views: at its best it would involve a lot of drudgery, and it was likely to be a thankless task. With the party reduced to eighteen, it was not going to be easy. One of my first successes was to get promises of support from the Lloyd George family party. I would like here to pay tribute to Megan Lloyd George. She often differed with me and never hesitated to speak her mind, but she was a splendid friend and I always felt I could rely on her and that she would not let me down. She did not often intervene in debate but when she did, she always spoke to the point and effectively, and what is more she got the ear of the House with her pleasant voice and sound sense. I know she has her critics: she would not be her father's

daughter without them: but she was both a good companion and excellent colleague throughout the long ten years of that Parliament elected in 1935. If I picked her out specially, it is no reflection on my other colleagues. We worked as a happy team, and though at times it took all my skill to get them into the same lobby, I hardly had a harsh word from any one of my little family.

Archie Sinclair is a man of singular charm. His smile is irresistible: he has beautiful manners; and he is far too good-looking and well dressed to be suspected for a Radical. He has the handicap of a stammer but he overcomes it with considerable skill: on occasions he is capable of great eloquence and emotional appeal of the kind to be expected from a Highlander. On service subjects and foreign affairs he speaks effectively, but he is not so strong on social problems in which he lacks experience. My only complaint about him was that his heart was in the Highlands: whenever I wanted him most he was always running off to Caithness. That was in the piping times of peace. Alas, in the war he stuck closely to his office and rarely visited either his home or constituency. This was his undoing: he had trained his electors to expect him to be continually amongst them, and when, though for a good cause, he absented himself, they failed to re-elect him.

Another man I must mention is Graham White. If ever there was a sound public man it is my friend Graham: disinterested, with a fine sense of duty and a varied knowledge of every kind of social problem, he was a mine of information and always ready to step into the breach.

My aim was to get a speaker called on every debate. With a party of only eighteen, and over 600 members in the House, this was no small task. First I had to find a member ready to speak, then to provide him with a brief, and finally to see that he was called and, if necessary, supported in the division lobby. I was all the time fighting for position: if I had weakened one iota we should have disappeared as a separate party. The measure of our success was the recognition of our status when the 1940 National Government came to be formed. Archie was excellent in the speaking line but the rough and tumble work fell on me. When the House was sitting I hardly left its precincts, all through those ten years. No doubt I took my duties too seriously but I did think I was fighting for the existence of the Liberal Party. If the results are to be evidence, the 1945 election indicates failure, but looking back I don't know what more could have been done, and it was at least worth having a try.

During the first five years I wore shiny the seat of my breeches, sitting on the bench of the old House of Commons until midnight or beyond. The place was badly ventilated and tempers often got

frayed. If no one else was there I would cut into the debate myself. "Speaking on behalf of my honourable friends," I would say, to the jeers of the honourable members opposite, looking to the left of me, only to find I was alone on the bench. It was a great experience: I learnt every move in the game and I hope it was worth while, though I sometimes doubt it. Certainly Liberals outside knew little of the work I was putting in to save their heritage for them. But I put it on record if only to encourage others who come after me.

I have already said how the Tories had featured sanctions against Italy at the General Election, and that both the other parties supported sanctions. If ever a government had a mandate from the nation for a particular policy, this government had it.

The new Parliament, which was to drag on for ten years, opened at the end of November, 1935, with the usual pomp and ceremony. The war between Italy and Abyssinia loomed large in the debate on the Address, and there was no indication of any slackening on the part of the Government in its sanctions policy.

Within three weeks Sir Samuel Hoare had resigned, and was explaining to the House, from a corner seat below the gangway, his conduct of affairs and the reason for his agreement with Laval to hand over a large slice of Abyssinia to the Italians as the price of peace. It was a remarkable *volte-face*, almost unprecedented in parliamentary history.

Anthony Eden became Foreign Secretary and no doubt he tried to redeem the position, but the publication to the world of the Hoare-Laval agreement destroyed our moral authority, gave encouragement to Italy to pursue her policy of conquest, weakened our hold on the small powers and was bound to discredit the machinery of the League of Nations.

The debate on Hoare's resignation took place on 5th December, 1935, and Sinclair made a deep impression on the House. The fact is the Government had no real defence. The failure to impose oil sanctions and the success of the Italian campaign, with its ruthless use of planes and poison gas against almost unarmed natives, soon decided Abyssinia's fate. I emphasise these events because it was their mishandling that not only drove Italy into the hands of Germany, but completely discredited the League and collective security, and was to lead to another great war. It certainly encouraged both Hitler and Mussolini to believe in the weakness of Great Britain and that they could trample on her with impunity. Plenty of excuses were found for the weakness of the Government's foreign policy. We were told that the British fleet was under strength and not in a position to stand up to the Italians even with the help of the French. We now know that that was all

moonshine. Either the British Admiralty was singularly ill-informed, which does not seem likely, or, what is more probable, the Government was looking for excuses to cover up the weakness of its policy. Anyhow, the Tories had been five years in power with a big majority in the House, and they could not put all the blame on Ramsay MacDonald, who had been a prisoner in their hands and powerless to resist their instructions.

Most members of the House were sorry for Sam Hoare. After all, Baldwin was Prime Minister: if he had not known what line Sam Hoare was taking, he ought to have. Hoare at the time was a sick man and no doubt Laval twisted him round his fingers. "F.E." is said to have described Sam Hoare as the last of a long line of maiden aunts. His prim appearance and rather mincing style of speaking give colour to this description. He has ability and skill in negotiation, and these qualities made him a good ambassador when he was in Madrid; in fact he did excellent work helping our prisoners who escaped over the Pyrenees during the war. I had a lot to do with both John Simon and Sam Hoare when they were in turn Home Secretary.

Simon, of course, was always clever, but when he asked one to come and see him for consultation he did all the talking, and one could not get a word in edgeways.

But Sam Hoare was always a good listener, made everyone talk and was therefore able to pick other people's brains as well as identifying them with any action he finally decided to take. His conduct of the India Bill when it was going through Parliament was masterly: nothing would ruffle him, not even the attacks, often vitriolic, of Winston Churchill and his own Tory back-benchers.

Anthony Eden, who succeeded Hoare as Foreign Secretary, has always been to me something of a mystery. When I was at Geneva more than one foreign diplomat said to me, "We do like your Mr. Eden: he is so charming." That is exactly his effect on everyone—so charming, almost too good to be true! He reminds me of the pictures that used to appear on the back of Ouida's novels, the perfect hero, so good-looking and without a blemish. I have had many talks with him both personal and official and I always found him intelligent, quick in the uptake, well informed and ready to respond to ideas. I think I can say he is the most approachable minister in a high post that I have ever come across, and he is completely without side. But I cannot say his first occupation of the position of Foreign Secretary was a success. Certainly he inherited a pack of troubles from his predecessor, but he had been his under secretary and shared responsibility.

The Abyssinia situation went from bad to worse and ended in

the abdication of the Emperor and the final official withdrawal of sanctions in July, 1936.

Nor did Eden come out any better in his handling of the Spanish rebellion, which in my opinion is one of the sorriest stories in the whole of our diplomatic history. We were outmanœuvred at every turn by the Germans and Italians. It is true the inspiration for the non-intervention policy came from France, and it was customary for ministers to take cover under that cloak. But France was in a bad way, torn by internal dissensions, and the popular front that brought Blum to the position of Prime Minister was only loosely knit together. The machinations of the Germans and Italians were common knowledge and known to most people in political circles. I knew at least one or two ministers well enough to talk seriously to them about it, and I was met by the defence that in Fascist states it was difficult for our intelligence service to function and collect information. We know enough now to say of this defence: "Poppy-cock!" a slang word that well describes it. There were elements in this country that were so obsessed with fear of Bolshevism that it warped their judgment and played into the hands of the enemies of freedom.

The Spanish Republican Government no doubt had its faults, inevitable in a backward country where a large proportion of the people is illiterate. But that did not justify rebellion and the use of armed force against it. There was a good case, however, for non-intervention and leaving the Spaniards to settle their own internal quarrels, a good sound liberal principle to which no exception could be taken. But this is just what the Italians and Germans were not allowing them to do. Under the cloak of "volunteers," thousands of Italians and Germans were being directed to the peninsula, well-equipped, organised, and with experienced officers. A counter-charge was made that the Russians were doing the same, but I don't think there is much doubt that the other two countries started the game. Anyhow, Russia was too far away, and without the shipping facilities to do it on anything like the same scale. Naturally, the Spanish Government, deserted by its army and without arsenals, looked to the democracies for supplies, and as the legitimate government, it had the right to buy them. But under the cloak of non-intervention France and Great Britain closed their markets to them.

Great Britain, twice in six years, had voted overwhelmingly Conservative. The nation did so because it wanted a strong government. There was a feeling that whatever faults the Tories might have, they would maintain our prestige abroad and keep our defences efficient.

I am satisfied one of the reasons that the Conservative Party

fared so badly in 1945 was that the country felt, even in that one respect, they had let us down.

The Government openly admitted in 1936 that our national defences were weak. I have said elsewhere that I liked Baldwin, in fact anyone who knew him could not help doing so. But he cut a sorry figure when on the 12th November, 1936, he admitted that as long ago as 1933, "I and my friends were all very worried about what was happening in Europe. . . ." "You will remember," he continued, "the election at Fulham, in the autumn of 1933, when a seat which the National Government held was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist," and then he went on to add, "I asked myself what chance was there—when that feeling which was given expression to in Fulham was common throughout the country—what chance was there within the next year or two of that feeling being so changed that the country would give a mandate for rearmament."

I remember that speech sent a cold shiver down my back. It was such an admission of moral cowardice that I felt ashamed, especially coming from a man I held in high esteem.

Obviously he ought to have told the nation the truth. If they had not been prepared to take it, it would have been far better to have let another government accept responsibility. The British people have never failed to respond to a patriotic appeal and have never showed unwillingness to face unpleasant facts. They did so in 1914, they did so again in 1939. But they have the right to expect a lead. Nor is it fair to put the blame on the opposition: they never can have the inside information that the government in power has at its disposal.

I believe our comparative weakness in 1936 was grossly exaggerated and used as an excuse for a pusillanimous foreign policy.

In all the debates, both on foreign policy and defence, Archie Sinclair did well and won golden opinions in the House. But he alienated some of our friends outside, who thought the Liberal Parliamentary Party was becoming too militant; in fact we lost at least one or two big subscribers to our funds. How right he was, was to be proved by events.

Perhaps it is not unfitting here to say something about the Government's abortive attempt to reorganise our defences.

Liberals persistently and consistently advocated the creation of a Ministry of Supply, and in this were backed both by Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in the light of their experience in the previous war. But the Government would not listen to it and they produced instead the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, in March, 1936. Winston Churchill's name was freely mentioned and he was the obvious man for the appointment, and had he been selected

he would have made something of it. But I have a shrewd suspicion that Baldwin could not stomach having Winston once more in his Cabinet. In a burst of confidence he once remarked to me, "Winston is a blister: and I came to the conclusion that it is more comfortable to have a blister outside than inside." And there is a modicum of truth in that criticism. Winston is all right at the top, but not easy in a subordinate position. Be that as it may, the choice fell on Tom Inskip, afterwards Lord Chief Justice. Inskip made an excellent Attorney General. He was not regarded in the profession as a great legal luminary, but I have never known a law officer handle the House better. Clever law officers have often made bad parliamentarians: they are inclined to patronise members, have little patience with their foibles, and irritate them. I have seen a law officer needlessly prolong a debate, simply because he could not tolerate members' lack of understanding of legal points.

But Inskip always exercised patience and forbearance, and would often get a clause of a bill through by tact and good humour, where a cleverer lawyer might have stirred up trouble. But lawyers rarely make good administrators: their training does not lend itself to executive jobs. But government chief whips like them because they are supreme in debate and are equally good in answering a bad case as a good one. That is why in all parliaments so many jobs go to the lawyers and so few to business men and industrialists. The lawyers can state a case, and although a man with commercial training may be far more capable as an administrator, he is often dumb when it comes to debate and answering criticism across the floor of the House.

Inskip did not want the position: he was making considerable financial sacrifice by taking it. When I met him in the Lobby and asked him if I was to congratulate him, he replied in the negative, but explained that when the Prime Minister invited him to take it in the national interest, he felt he had no alternative but to accept—and I am sure he was telling the truth.

Inskip is a deeply religious man, an Evangelical, and the story was generally accepted in the Temple that he would never do any work on his briefs on Sundays. Tom is the same age as I am, and at one time we often used to walk home together, and though in opposite camps, talk freely and frankly on all sorts of subjects. He can be described as a kind and just man, but certainly not a man of action, and I am sure that is the last thing he would claim for himself.

When the blimp balloon used to fly over the Horse Guards Parade, it was familiarly known as Tom Inskip, and when one day at a naval parade I told him this, no one enjoyed the joke more than he did.

He was appointed Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence just because of his particular qualities of tact and good humour, the idea being that he was to bring the defence departments together and bring about a close co-operation: he was to be the man with the oil-can, to run around and get the machine to work smoothly.

Once after a long speech of his, which received very adverse criticism in the House, he asked me if I was among his critics. "On the contrary," I replied; "you spoke charmingly for over an hour and told us nothing. No one else could have done that so effectively," and that seemed to comfort him.

But quite a different type of man was required to meet the situation, someone with drive and imagination, able to speed up production and adapt our military machine to the rapidly changing conditions of modern warfare. Inskip was quite unsuited to such a task and if he failed it was not his fault, but the responsibility of those who appointed him. I write at length on this subject because I was a close observer at that time, and it does help to explain shortcomings revealed in 1939.

I know I shall be faced with the obvious answer that Haldane was a lawyer and a successful Secretary of State for War. But his make-up was very different, he was a man in a million, a scientist and a philosopher, and he won the admiration and respect of his expert advisers for his extraordinary gifts for mastering detail.

The last month of 1936 was notable for the abdication of King Edward VIII, a situation that was handled by Baldwin with consummate skill and tact. It was a pathetic business, and most of us who were present could not but be deeply moved by the departure from the throne of a man who had opened his public life with so much promise, and whose personality had such charm.

But it was a remarkable example of the adaptability of the British Constitution. I shall not easily forget the 10th December, 1936, when Baldwin stood at the Bar of the House of Commons and facing the Speaker said, "A message from His Majesty the King, signed by His Majesty's own hand," advanced down the floor of the House and handed the letter of abdication to the Speaker, who proceeded to read it.

Baldwin then related the events that led to the resignation and, after a short debate, presented a Bill to give effect to the abdication. On the next day, the Bill went through all its stages, second reading, committee stage, report, third reading, then went through the same process that very morning in the House of Lords, after which the faithful Commons were summoned to the Bar of the Upper House to hear the Royal Assent, as is customary, through Commissioners appointed by His Majesty for the purpose. The Clerk read out the title of the Bill, "His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Bill,"

and another clerk, using the customary form and bowing to the Royal Commission, said, "*Le Roi le veut*" (the King wills it), and by 1.52 p.m. Edward VIII ceased to be king and had been succeeded by his brother as George VI.

There was no fuss and no difference in the procedure than if it had been a Drainage Bill, a great tribute to the adaptability of parliamentary forms to meet any situation.

In May, 1937, Baldwin resigned the Premiership to make way for Neville Chamberlain.

For most of the years I was in the House of Commons I sat at the head of a table in the dining-room alongside the ministerial table. It became to be known as the Liberal table, and rarely did members from other quarters of the House venture to sit there except by invitation, though we had no monopoly right to it. At dinner it was crowded, but in those days members generally had their mid-day meal elsewhere. But Baldwin was a regular attendant, and so was I, and we often had the room almost to ourselves, and used to exchange pleasantries.

Many people complained that he was shy and stand-offish, but I never found him so, and we used to talk on all sorts of subjects. Two or three days before his resignation came into effect he was lunching in his usual place, and I remarked, "I hear we are likely to lose you from this room: we shall miss you." "No, you won't," he replied, "people are soon forgotten." "But," I replied, "when you are in the House of Lords there is nothing to prevent you from lunching here from time to time." He got up from his place and remarked, "Once I leave, I leave. I am not going to speak to the man on the bridge, and I am not going to spit on the deck." I believe he has been true to his word. He has hardly made a public political utterance since he ceased to be Prime Minister, or criticised his successors. No man holding high office has ever so completely retired into obscurity, but I think in that action he has been inspired by what he conceives his sense of duty. I have seen him on one or two occasions since his retirement, and had a talk with him about events and persons, when his judgment has always been shrewd and to the point.

I often had talks with his successor, Chamberlain, on various subjects, but I never became intimate with him or got behind his reserve. Our relations were friendly but always official.

I understand Baldwin saw the war clouds gathering over Europe and thought it required a new man as Prime Minister, and felt that Neville Chamberlain had the necessary qualities.

Chamberlain had been a good Minister of Health and was an efficient Chancellor of the Exchequer. But he lacked the historic background, knew little about international affairs and only entered

political life well into his middle age. I doubt if it had not been for his father, Joseph, and his brother, Austen, we should have ever heard of him. L.G. had a poor opinion of him, almost contempt, and dismissed him in 1917 because of his failure as Minister of National Service. But he under-rated him: Neville was efficient and shrewd in his own particular way. "F.E.," i.e., Birkenhead, described him as Lord Mayor of Birmingham in a lean year. On the other hand, his own particular followers, after he became Prime Minister, were lyrical about his qualities. I have never seen such devotion, though the Conservatives have one quality in good measure, viz., loyalty to their chosen leader whoever he may be. Churchill, of whom they had nothing good to say when he was out of office and a critic, became in turn their idol once he attained power.

Europe is a jig-saw puzzle and it is extremely difficult to put the pieces together. But strange to say, many Members of Parliament who would not express an opinion on internal problems do not hesitate to lay down the law on foreign affairs.

During the war there was comparatively little competition to speak on legislation, but when we came to international relations, half the members wanted to cut in and have their say. Questions of race, language, religion, geography and history, are all irretrievably mixed up in Europe, and problems cannot be unravelled without an intimate knowledge of the reaction of all these forces. The Baltic, the Balkans, the Danube, all present different problems. Religion is a big influence and there is always an undercurrent of race and religion. Behind everything is economic pressure and hunger, and now in addition comes political ideology—monarchy versus republic, dictatorship versus democracy. The classic example of ignorance was old Bill Steadman, in a debate on foreign affairs, saying that he would like to see the Navy steaming up the Balkans.

But to return to Chamberlain, I don't believe he understood the psychology of foreigners: he had the mentality of a Birmingham business man and he felt he could handle them with the same technique as when he was carrying through a commercial transaction. I am not going to assert that anyone could have prevented the war, but I am sure Chamberlain did not understand Mussolini, or Franco, or Hitler or Stalin. I think if Winston Churchill or Lloyd George had been Prime Minister, our relations with all those persons would have been different. Chamberlain was pained and surprised when all these foreigners did not conform to the standards which he was accustomed to.

I might here mention that in 1935 I became treasurer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and held the position for ten years until I ceased to be a Member of Parliament.

The union dates back to 1889, when it was founded by the late Mr. Cremer, a Liberal M.P., in co-operation with a Frenchman, Frederic Passy. It has of recent years been rather overshadowed by the Empire Parliamentary Union. But before the days of the League of Nations it did play a very great part in the peace movement, in particular by bringing together representatives from parliaments all over the world.

The U.S.A. has been a consistent supporter and Congress subscribed handsomely towards the expenses of the Central Organisation at Geneva. The British Treasury gives an annual grant of £500, and I had the satisfaction as treasurer of remitting this amount to Switzerland every year during the war, though at times I had a bit of a struggle to get the money, on the grounds that its activities were in suspense.

In peace the Inter-Parliamentary Union has an annual conference and visits in turn the parliaments of the countries that belong to it.

Perhaps the most historic of its conferences was the one held in London in 1906, which was attended by representatives of the short-lived Russian Duma, and when Campbell-Bannerman, then Prime Minister, in his speech of welcome said, "New institutions have often a disturbed, if not a stormy youth. The Duma will revive in one form or another. We can say with all sincerity, 'The Duma is dead: long live the Duma'," these last words causing something of a sensation, echoing round the world as a challenge from Democracy.

In September, 1937, I attended the conference at Paris which met in the chamber of the French Senate at the Luxembourg Palace. Twenty-four countries were represented, including the U.S.A., Italy, Hungary and Eire. I was never quite clear how Italy qualified for membership in 1937, but she did think it worth while to send a representative. I took part in the discussion and after I had returned from the rostrum to my seat, I heard a voice from behind me saying in a rich Irish brogue, "Those were fine Liberal sentiments." It was my old friend Dillon, son of the Dillon who played such a big part in the Irish Parliamentary Party when they were in the British House of Commons. He is a nephew of the late Charles Mathew, K.C., and when he was a youth I often used to meet him at his house. Now he has won distinction in the Dail for his courage and independence, and he should have a great career before him. But I must not praise him too much or I might prejudice his future!

The French branch of the Union entertained us generously, took us to the Paris exhibition, had a fine display of the fountains at Versailles, a gala performance at the theatre there, and a banquet

followed by fireworks. But I felt then that all was not well in France. I came away with a feeling that something was wrong. Even in arrangements for our hospitality, which were most generous, the organisation was constantly breaking down. The exhibition was a fine one, but it was a long way behind its time-table and appallingly incomplete.

The French are a brilliant people, imaginative and artistic. But they have not learned efficiency in the modern sense: that is half their charm. But when they have to stand up to a ruthless enemy 100 per cent efficient, this is a serious handicap.

I think the Inter-Parliamentary Union presents great possibilities in the immediate future. Parliaments are very much on their trial: their construction and methods of election vary from country to country. The more their elected members can meet and exchange views, the more hope there will be for both political and economic co-operation. Personal contact between the representatives of the democracies cannot but promote good understanding between nations.

During 1938 the European situation grew steadily worse. Looking back over the events of that year it is amusing to come across a speech made by me at the Bethnal Green branch of the League of Nations Union. This speech received rather unexpected publicity in the Press, and I venture to quote the report as it appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* of 21st January, 1938: "This is the most critical period in the League's history. Some of its supporters are losing faith. It took six centuries to build up the British Parliament as it is to-day, and it is still far from perfect. Other countries have tried to copy our parliamentary institutions in a hurry and have failed, and I am by no means depressed with the position. I am convinced that Anthony Eden is a real believer in the League and what it stands for. If he will take his courage in both hands and give the League at its next meeting a real lead, he can rely on the backing of myself and my friends."

I should have thought no one could have taken exception to these remarks. Actually they were made at a non-political meeting with no desire to promote controversy. But they aroused the fury of Viscount Castlerosse, who, in the *Daily Express* of 24th January, wrote a flamboyant four-column attack on my speech. After quoting my reference to Eden, he uttered this solemn warning, "Let Mr. Eden beware, for since the days of Scylla and Charybdis there has been nothing quite so dangerous as the political friendship of Sir Percy Harris and his friends."

I would have hardly thought the incident worth recording, except for the strange coincidence that in less than a month Anthony Eden's resignation was in the hands of the Prime Minister.

The ostensible reason for the resignation was a difference of opinion as to "whether official conversations should be opened in Rome now."

In his letter of resignation he emphasised that "Apart from this, I have become increasingly conscious, as I know you have also, of a difference of outlook between us in respect of the international problems of the day and also as to the methods by which we should resolve them."

It wants courage to resign office, especially such an influential position as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and his resignation will always stand to Eden's everlasting credit. The only criticism I have is that he did not take this decision earlier and, once having taken it, that he did not follow it up by more active leadership.

I happened to see Baldwin at the time, and I don't think I shall now be revealing any secret if I say, after this lapse of time, that he told me Eden had consulted him as to the form and character of his subsequent speech and he very much edited it. Baldwin explained to me that the one thing he wanted to prevent Eden from doing was to say anything that would cause a split in the Conservative Party. He had ample warning in the differences that had done so much to destroy the Liberal Party. And there is something to be said for that point of view. Liberals seemed to have delighted in airing their differences, which always disheartened their supporters and delighted their enemies.

But I do think Anthony Eden missed a great opportunity in not taking the nation into his confidence. The country was crying out for leadership, and it was entitled to be warned of the dangers ahead about which Eden was only too conscious.

The failure to enforce sanctions, the betrayal of Abyssinia and the mishandling of the Spanish civil war, and the so-called non-intervention policy, inevitably led to Munich, and finally the destruction of Czechoslovakia. Every effort of Great Britain to conciliate the dictators was interpreted by them as weakness and encouraged them to flout us still further.

Poor Mr. Chamberlain danced to Herr Hitler's tune.

There is no doubt we all rejoiced when we were spared the horrors of war, but I do not admit for one moment that the opposition must share the responsibility of the mishandling of the European situation that September. Archie Sinclair passionately felt the betrayal of this sturdy little nation, which especially appealed to his sense of chivalry. I remember going, at his request, to see Jan Masaryk at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Grosvenor Place, both to express sympathy and to get information, and Jan said that this meant something more than the sacrifice of the independence of his country: it was the end of Liberalism in Europe. Europe was

rapidly drifting into barbarism. The cruel and merciless persecution of the Jews was all part of the new dispensation. The occupation of Prague, the conquest of Austria, the absorption of the Rhineland, all provided ample evidence that Hitler and the Nazis could not be trusted. But if any more evidence was wanted, surely it could be found in the ruthless and cruel treatment of their own nationals, not only Jews, but their political opponents. And I often wonder if Mr. Chamberlain ever seriously thought we could avoid a clash with Germany by the policy of appeasement.

Churchill was constantly warning the Government of the dangers ahead. I am not sure that Churchill's finest parliamentary speeches were not made in the years immediately before the outbreak of war in 1939. When he was Prime Minister he made great orations, but he knew he had the House of Commons behind him, and the whole nation, if not the whole world, was listening in; in other words, he had a perfect setting for his speeches. But in 1938 and 1939 he was a leader without a party, the Government was hostile and the Labour Party none too friendly to him. He would often rise unheralded in a half-empty House, but before he had finished he was speaking to crowded benches and held members by the brilliance of his oratory. In those days he had two devoted adherents, Robert Boothby and Brendan Bracken, the one had dark hair and the other red. They were familiarly known as Winston's Black and Tans, and their appearance together generally heralded a speech by their leader.

It is no secret that Archie Sinclair worked closely with Churchill in his study of defence problems.

We Liberals were constantly pressing our views, particularly on the need for a Ministry of Supply.

In November, 1938, on the opening of a new session, I tabled, on behalf of the party, an amendment to the Address calling for the creation of a Ministry of Supply, which was debated on the seventeenth of the month. Churchill made a magnificent speech in support of this amendment, some of which is worth quoting: "We are indebted to the Liberal Party for having brought the House of Commons squarely to the fence. The House must jump it or swerve ignominiously away from it, and in the result, as I believe, lose a race upon which the stakes not only comprise the safety of our country, but also affect great causes of world significance. We have drifted on and we have drifted down and the question to-night is whether we go on drifting or make a renewed effort to rise." But Churchill was not content only with speech, he actually went into the division lobby in support of our amendment against the Government.

Churchill's speeches caused great resentment in official Conservative quarters, and they were severely criticised in his own constituency. In the autumn of 1938, Mr. Thornton-Kemsley, later elected at a by-election for Kincardine, said at a meeting at Nazeing, in Churchill's constituency, "I feel that unless Mr. Churchill is prepared to work for the National Government and the Prime Minister, he ought no longer to shelter under the goodwill and name of such a great party. Most of us in Epping division agree Mr. Churchill has overstepped the mark." It became common knowledge that the local Conservatives were seriously contemplating adopting a candidate against him. This put the local Liberal Association in somewhat of a quandary. They had always run a Liberal candidate against him, and had a good organisation. I was consulted as to their attitude and was invited to address the annual meeting at Woodford on 22nd November, 1938, when I compared, "the pigmies now sitting on the Treasury Bench with the great figures of past Liberal governments, Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Haldane and Lloyd George. These names are remembered, but who will know the names of the present government twenty years hence? I have omitted the name of your own member: he was a great First Lord of the Admiralty in a Liberal government. He is quite the greatest parliamentarian we have got, but I sometimes think that patriotic as our ministers are, they would rather lose a war than have him as a colleague. These Lilliputians don't like Gulliver; he makes them feel small."

Churchill appreciated this speech and went out of his way to thank me for it. Little did we think that in less than two years Churchill would not only be Prime Minister but Leader of the Conservative Party.

Those of us who were responsible for Liberal policy were convinced that the policy of appeasement had failed, that we were gradually drifting into war, and that nothing would prevent it except some clear sign that we were determined to resist aggression.

The best evidence of that determination, we felt, would be to bring Churchill and Eden into the Government. Dictators do yield to strength, but interpret conciliation as a sign of weakness. It was for that reason we initiated a campaign for the inclusion of Churchill and Eden in the Cabinet. It is interesting to speculate what effect it would have had on the situation if this proposal had been accepted. It certainly would have strengthened our position with the neutrals: it would undoubtedly have meant the speeding up of armaments, and it might have made the Nazis reconsider their plans. But the propaganda in favour of Churchill was deeply resented by Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, though it did get

support from some of the more independent-minded of the Conservative leaders, such as Lord Salisbury and Lord Selborne. Curiously enough, Chamberlain found a defender of his policy in no less a person than Alfred Spender, the distinguished Liberal editor of the old *Westminster Gazette*, and his advocacy gave great comfort to the Conservatives.

Alfred Spender was an old friend of mine whom I held in high esteem. I had been a regular contributor to his paper and there was no one whose opinions I valued more. He was a great journalist and his knowledge of affairs was unrivalled. The old *Westminster* was often described as "the sea-green incorruptible." Its circulation was small but its influence great. He had the confidence of both Asquith and Edward Grey who, in the height of their power, used to consult him on all important occasions. There is no one I have known who was a more delightful conversationalist or who had a clearer or more concise mind. But of recent years he had got out of touch with affairs. The *Westminster Gazette* had ceased to exist: for a time he added distinction to the columns of the *News Chronicle*, until they were closed to him, and I do think he had become rather a lonely figure. Besides, he was deeply convinced that the international situation should be outside the arena of party politics and something to be left to the experts, a sound theory up to a point but dangerous when carried too far. Foreign affairs are not sacrosanct: they should not be exploited for party purposes, but public men cannot divest themselves of responsibility and if they feel a wrong policy is being pursued they have a duty to express their disagreement and put forward constructive proposals.

I see much is being said at the present in favour of continuity in foreign policy and up to a point that is sound, but that must not mean silencing all criticism, and that public men must not express disagreement when they are opposed to a particular policy. I don't think it is always wise to shout opinions about foreign countries from the house-tops, and where a Foreign Secretary is accessible it is often better to convey to him your personal or party views. During the last ten years, especially in the war, I had frequent interviews on behalf of my friends with the Foreign Secretary of the day. But in the last resort it is necessary to reserve the right to express opinions in Parliament or outside, on foreign affairs as on anything else.

Spender on this occasion used the columns of *The Times* openly to rebuke Sir Archibald Sinclair and his friends for their attitude to Chamberlain.

A number of leading Liberals, including such names as Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, Lady Gladstone, A. G. Gardiner, Sir

Walter Layton and Lord Meston, sent to the Press a letter defending Sinclair's attitude concluding with the pregnant paragraph, "Mr. Spender deprecates 'recriminations in criticisms.' The essence and foundation of democratic government is free and fearless criticism of the executive. To Liberals it is disturbing that such criticism should be condemned by a Liberal of Mr. Spender's tradition." This letter, with four final paragraphs omitted, was published in *The Times*, though it was published in full by other papers. When a protest was made at the mutilation of the letter, *The Times*, in a leading article on 13th July, explained that it had "steadily held aloof" from the "now familiar clamour" for the inclusion of Mr. Churchill in the Cabinet. The reply had therefore been published "in so far as it constituted a Liberal reply to Mr. Spender and omitted the Churchill peroration."

Needless to say, though my signature was not appended to the letter, I played an active part behind the scenes.

Mr. Churchill recently has shown great bitterness against the conduct of the Liberals at the last General Election, but it is well to remember that when he had few friends we were, in the public interest, loud in pressing his claims.

Actually, the Spender incident came at a time when it might have proved most embarrassing. Sir Francis Acland, who represented North Cornwall in the House of Commons, died in July, 1939. His family had long been associated with the West of England, and he was a well-known public figure. On the other hand, Horrabin, who stood at the by-election, was a complete stranger there and was inexperienced politically. The Conservatives naturally exploited the Spender letter to the full and broadcast it throughout the division. But the Liberal majority was increased from 836 to 1,464.

The Acland family has a remarkable history. The present holder of the title is the fifteenth baronet, and for the past 260 years one generation after another has sat in the House of Commons. The Aclands have a magnificent record of public service. Owners of fine estates, they might well have given themselves up to the management of these and the usual county pursuits of wealthy men, hunting, shooting and fishing.

Sir Arthur Dyke Acland, father of Francis and grandfather of Richard, sat in Gladstone's last Cabinet, and was Minister of Education in Rosebery's short-lived government. Francis held several ministerial posts in Asquith's government, but when out of office was not content to rest on his laurels. He was said to have been chairman of more committees than any one of his contemporaries. He was on the Devon County Council and Chairman of the Education Committee, and he always seemed to be rushing

backwards and forwards between Parliament and the West of England. He was a great gardener, and took intense interest in all sorts of plants. But his special hobby was knitting ties, and he amused himself at it in the House of Commons instead of twiddling his thumbs. When I became Chief Whip, Richard Acland became an assistant whip. He was always charming and courteous, but I was never quite certain what he would say or do, and it was agreed that his attitude was hardly consonant to an official of the party, and he resigned. After the outbreak of the war his speeches became more extreme in form and matter. I was pressed from outside to turn him out of the party, but this I refused to do. Liberals have always allowed wide latitude of speech and action among their members, and I certainly did not intend to make him a martyr. From time to time I had him to my room and called attention to the character of his speeches, and he always met the challenge by asking me if I was not satisfied he was a Liberal why did I not turn him out of the party. My answer was that it was up to him to search his own conscience and if he could not fit his opinions to Liberal doctrines, to take the initiative himself and separate from the party. I was severely criticised at the time, but I was anxious not to narrow membership of the party to a creed. If I once started turning people out because of unorthodox principles there would be no end to it and we should cease to be Liberal in the best and broadest sense of the word.

I have never doubted the sincerity of Dick Acland's professed opinions nor his actions. I am sure he surrendered his inheritance from a deep conviction that ownership of great estates was wrong. But in many ways Dick is extraordinarily simple and unworldly. I don't think he has ever been up against the hard facts of life, but lives in a never-never world of his own imagination. He has never lacked courage and is prepared to shout his opinions from the house-tops, however unpopular they might be. For that I bless him, but I do wish he did not live so completely in a land of fantasy.

The House of Commons rose for the Summer Recess in 1939 with signs of revival for the Liberal Party, but the European situation was far from promising, though it did not look black enough to prevent me planning a holiday abroad. The holiday problem is always a difficult one: both my wife and I are busy people and are always inclined to leave it to the last moment, by which time every hotel is booked up. Some bright person had told us of an hotel on the Ile de Ré, near La Rochelle, and we did book rooms there. That journey is indelibly impressed on my mind as I have not been in France since. We motored to Dieppe and travelled leisurely across France in our car. The weather was bad th

August and we often could hardly see through the windscreen, so thick was the rain. The Ile de Ré was about as miserable a spot as I have struck—I found out it was the place where they sent political prisoners! It was wind-swept and hardly had a tree of any size, and where our hotel was the beach was so muddy that it was next to impossible to bathe. The one charming thing about it was that whilst we were there there was one of those delightful fairs that one can see only in France. Most fairs are attractive, but French ones have a gaiety, an abandon, that is characteristic of her people. However, we did not stay long, but proceeded to find our way back home. The hotels everywhere, unfortunately, were full. The French have acquired the holiday habit, and at that particular date in August they all seemed to be indulging in it. When we reached Tours after testing several smaller towns, it was getting late and every hotel received us with the greeting, "Full up." There seemed no prospect other than to sleep out, when a young man who was standing near an hotel reception desk heard our cries of despair and asked if he could help. It seemed his people were away on holiday and he had had to stay behind to sit for an examination. He was only about eighteen and was bored with living in a large house alone. We took him at his word, found a large town house with all the furniture covered with dust-sheets and no beds made. He thought it great fun and showed us the linen cupboard where we found sheets, and so made up a couple of beds. The house was thoroughly bourgeois and conventional, and I have often wondered what mamma and papa said about the interlopers when they returned.

It was a good thing we did not linger too long on our journey back: a day or two longer and we should have suffered the fate of many others and had great difficulty in getting home. On this journey we had talks with many Frenchmen. They all seemed certain there would not be any war, and if there were that France would not be in it: it would be between Great Britain and Germany.

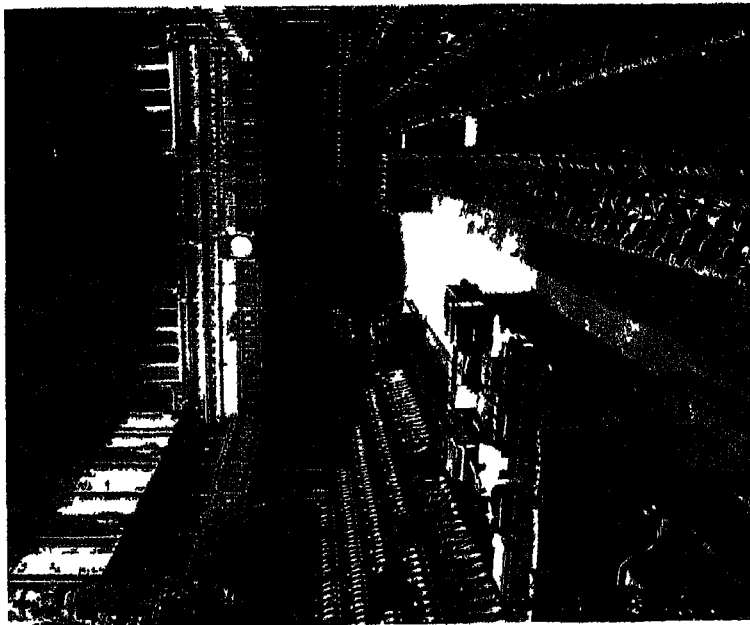
France, we were assured, was determined to keep out of war at all costs and was not going to get involved in other people's quarrels. These were the opinions of the ordinary folk we met, and it is always dangerous to draw conclusions from casual conversations, but we certainly left France with the feeling that the French people had no stomach for war.

On 25th August the Anglo-Polish Treaty was signed which definitely committed Great Britain to come to the aid of Poland in case of attack. I shall not in a hurry forget the week-end which culminated in the declaration of war. On Friday, 1st September,

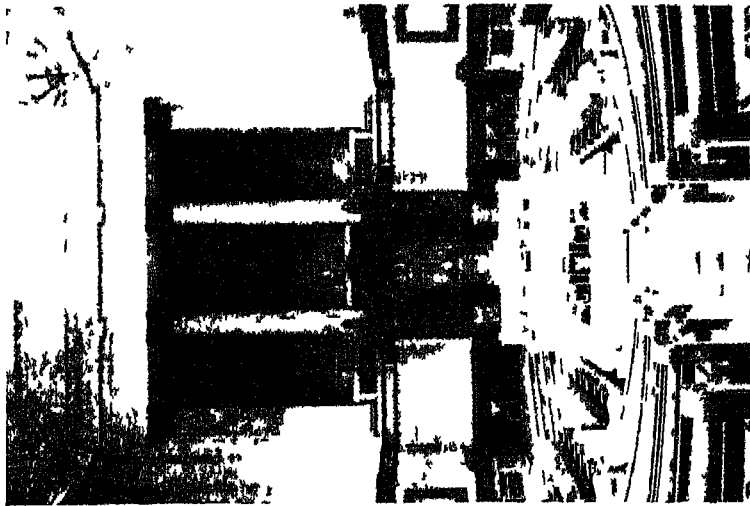
the House of Commons was occupied with the Military Service Bill.

Parliament rarely meets on a Saturday, and the fact that the House was called together on 2nd September indicated some momentous announcement was to be made. Though the proceedings followed their usual course, little interest was taken in them. Meanwhile on the tape the news was ticking off that the invasion of Poland by Germany was an accomplished fact. Under the treaty Great Britain was automatically under an obligation to aid Poland. It was handed round to members that at 6 p.m. a statement would be made by the Prime Minister, and it was generally understood that he would announce that war had been declared. But six o'clock struck and there was no sign of Neville Chamberlain. Then a few of us were informed in strict confidence that there had been a hitch in the arrangements with France, and that their Government could not take action until the next morning, when the French Chamber met. It was important, therefore, no hint of this should creep into the Press, as any premature announcement by Great Britain would be deeply resented on the other side of the Channel. But the great majority of members knew nothing of these talks behind the Speaker's chair, and when Chamberlain rose about 6.45 p.m. there was an atmosphere of hushed expectancy. I felt sorry for Chamberlain: he showed signs of the strain of the last few days, and as he proceeded to make a non-committal statement in that cold, unemotional voice of his, you could feel the growing hostility of the House, and there were murmurs of "Appeasement!" especially from some of those who had hitherto most favoured that policy. Mr. Attlee was away ill, and when Arthur Greenwood got up to speak for the Labour opposition there was intense excitement. Amery called out, "Be British!" an interjection not recorded in *Hansard*. Greenwood knew the situation but with consummate skill he expressed the feelings of the House, at the same time avoiding criticism of Neville. When he said, "While England and France are dallying, bombs are dropping in Poland," there were defiant cheers, ample evidence that members felt war was inevitable.

I had arranged to drive myself home that night. As I left Palace Yard the police at the gates told me to turn off my car lights: the street lamps were out, it was pouring with rain, and it was with difficulty I found my way round Parliament Square to Tothill Street. Never good at finding my way in the dark, I found myself driving more or less blind. I therefore decided to put my car in a garage just behind Wellington Barracks, but when I tried to enter I was stopped at the entrance by a sentry: the military were already in possession. Whatever delay there might be in official pronounce-



The Chamber of the House of Commons destroyed by
enemy action on 9th May, 1941
see page 120



[By kind permission of the London County Council]
The Council Chamber County
Hall London
see page 40



L'Photopress

The Duchess of Atholl receiving gifts at Pound Day of Bethnal Green Nursery of which Sir Percy is President.
See page 87.

ments there was every indication that we were in a state of war. On the morrow, Sunday, 3rd September, the House of Commons was summoned together for 11.15 a.m. I was living at Chiswick, and I walked to Stamford Brook station and took the Underground train for Westminster. At Victoria someone got into my carriage and mentioned that Neville had already broadcast to the nation that we were at war. When I reached Westminster the train stopped, but the doors controlled by the driver did not open. After waiting some minutes I banged at the window and signalled to the porter to let me out. The only reply I got was, "Be patient, gov'nor. All in good time." It never occurred to me that there was any special reason for my being shut in, but when the doors were opened the porter explained with a grin that there was an air raid on. I hurried through the subway under Bridge Street to the House, fearing to be late, but as soon as I arrived I was literally pushed downstairs to a shelter packed with members. There had been an air-raid warning, but whether it was a false alarm or merely a try-out of the machinery I have never been able to ascertain.

CHAPTER X

PARLIAMENT, 1939 TO 1945

SOME day there will be a proper appraisal of the Allied strategy of the early months of the war.

Poland was overrun by Germany. Russia attacked her in the rear and her fate was soon sealed: there was much expression of sympathy but no direct aid. France remained safely entrenched behind her Maginot Line and except for small adjustments of frontiers there were few signs of military activity.

I made many attempts to explore the significance of the policy of masterly inactivity and was assured that Gamelin was a great general, that the Maginot Line was unassailable, that our blockade was complete, and that neither German economy nor finance could stand the strain of a prolonged war. The British people became far more interested in Russia's attack on Finland than in the phoney war in the West. There were many people who wanted us to give help to the sorely-tried Finns, there were many donations in the form of fur coats and warm clothing to them, in fact the nation's mind was diverted from Poland to Finland.

Meanwhile a letter appeared in *The Times* of 25th September, 1939, over my signature, appealing for the re-creation of the Select Committee on Expenditure that had done such useful work

in the previous war. Archie Sinclair gave it support in the House of Commons and I tabled a motion in favour of it on behalf of the Liberal members. I received support from all quarters of the House, but the idea was first frowned on by Simon, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who suggested that it would involve interference by Parliament with the responsibility of the Executive. However, pressure increased as public expenditure expanded, and finally the Government succumbed, and on 4th December the Select Committee on National Expenditure was set up.

My name was freely canvassed for the position of chairman of the committee. Archie Sinclair was sounded as to his view, and he paid me the compliment of saying that he could not spare me from my work as Chief Whip, but it is quite probable that, had it not been for my official position, I should have been nominated, especially as it was the general custom for a member of the opposition to be chosen as chairman of parliamentary committees of that kind. However, I make no complaint, as the chairmanship of such a committee involves a terrific amount of work. Fortunately we found an excellent chairman in Wardlaw-Milne, whose devoted labours for five years are entitled to every recognition. After the committee was properly constituted a small committee was appointed to make recommendations as to sub-committees and to name chairmen. Sir William Jowitt, Wardlaw-Milne and myself composed it, and we had the help of a very able secretary, an official of the House of Commons, Captain Diver. These officials of the House of Commons receive very little limelight, they work in complete obscurity, and their names are hardly known to the public, but a more capable and efficient body of men I cannot conceive. They write most of the reports, and their guiding hands are largely responsible for the high standard of parliamentary papers.

I wanted to take over the War Office sub-committee, in the light of my experience in the previous war, but my colleagues insisted on putting me in charge of the Navy as the Admiralty had the reputation of being very sticky and reluctant to part with information. I must say I enjoyed my work on that sub-committee.

We travelled up and down the country in search of information, visited most of the dockyards, torpedo factories, naval works and stores. I was lost in admiration for the personality and character of naval officers: they have a fine tradition and there is an absence of red tape.

But both my committee and myself became convinced that the Admiralty do claim too many posts for flag captains that should more properly go to either civilians or engineer officers. We were given charts showing channels of communication, most elaborate,

but always the civilian or engineer was in a subordinate position, quite right on a battleship but carried too far on a shore base.

The technician is becoming more important every day. The ship is a mass of gadgets and electrical devices; the engineer officer starts with the same training, but tradition is that he should always remain in a subordinate position. Lord Fisher saw the trend and enabled the engineer to rise to flag rank. When I explained to a distinguished naval member of the Board the views of my committee, he made the trite reply that you might as well have a medical admiral on the Board as an engineer; such a reply is mere tripe, and I am sure the reform will come sooner or later. A similar case can be made for His Majesty's Dockyards. At one time a civilian was in charge of them, but now it is claimed as a perquisite for a flag officer. In fact, at most dockyards we visited we came away with the impression that a flag officer was a charming host, but quite superfluous, the real work being done by engineer officers and their civilian staffs. It is all nonsense to pretend that a dockyard is like a ship. It is a highly organised engineering job and should be run like a shipbuilding yard, of which it is more or less a counterpart.

I had hoped that Alexander, when he became First Lord, would be open to argument, but we found he was completely captured by the gold lace and entirely in their hands. Alexander is a most approachable minister and a pleasant fellow, but the quarter-deck is a most insidious influence, and it has captured him body and soul. He has even acquired the naval lilt and I can almost see him dancing the hornpipe. He is deservedly popular in the Navy and that is greatly to his credit and I hope what I have said will not be interpreted as any disparagement of his service to the war during his tenure of office. But I have felt bound to record my reaction. As I made clear at the outset of these remarks, I am lost in admiration for the Navy, but nothing is perfect. It is quite right to retain the Nelson touch, but we have no longer wooden walls and seamanship is not everything. Just as in industry the production engineer must come into his own, so must the technician in the Admiralty be allowed his proper place at the top. My criticism is by no means confined to the officer side. The executive civil heads are not given their proper position in the hierarchy. The Director of Contracts, who handles millions and makes deals with big contractors enjoying salaries of £10,000 a year or more, receives only £1,800 a year. I am sure they should be paid at a rate equivalent to the head of a government department. I know they are incorruptible and devoted servants of the State, but if they are to meet heads of industry on some terms of equality they should be paid salaries commensurate with their responsibilities.

The same argument applies to such positions as the Chief Electrical Engineer, on whose design depends the whole mechanical working of a modern battleship costing many millions.

I take this opportunity to place on record my views, which were largely shared by members of my sub-committee, which, by the way, included one charming member, Viscountess Davidson. She is the daughter of Willoughby Dickinson, afterwards Lord Dickinson, for many years a member of the L.C.C. and afterwards Liberal M.P. for North St. Pancras. Alas, she has drifted away from the faith of her father and is now an ardent Conservative, having imbibed the opinions of her husband. She was an excellent member of our sub-committee, investigating many details that only a woman could dig out, and she was a loyal and helpful colleague. I had known her from a child and political differences have in no way interfered with our friendship.

During Easter the Chairman of the Select Committee went to South Africa on a delegation, and during his absence I acted as chairman of the main committee. During my term of office certain matters came to our notice that involved questions of high policy. We could not report on them without giving information to the enemy: on the other hand, if we passed them over we should be failing in our duty to the public. Common sense dictated in such circumstances, under war conditions, we should report to the Prime Minister direct, but the officials of the House informed us that that would be a serious breach of standing orders: a Select Committee is appointed by the House and therefore could only report direct to the House. Strange though it may seem, we had to pull many strings before we could get authority to report direct to the Prime Minister. The Cabinet secretariat viewed it with suspicion and thought there was some catch in it, and the Government Chief Whip feared there would be opposition to it in the House as infringing members' rights, but in the end power was given, and very useful it proved to be.

But I must hark back to April, 1940, when everything was overshadowed by the wanton invasion of Denmark and Norway by the Germans.

During that year I kept a rough diary and in it I find a note on 13th April: "In the evening real thrill: promised important war news 10.15 p.m. Kept on postponing it: at last about 11 p.m. they announced great victory at Narvik: Norwegians, however, seem to be having a rough time." The country then was suffering from an incorrigible optimism. Certainly our people had not yet realised what a powerful and ruthless enemy they were up against. They were soon to be disillusioned.

Things, of course, did not go well with us in Norway.

On Monday, 29th April, Neville Chamberlain asked me to go and see him at Downing Street, Archie Sinclair being away in Scotland. There was nothing novel in this as I had made similar visits on several occasions. But I thought the situation so grave that I asked permission to bring with me Lord Crewe, Liberal leader in the House of Lords. I found Neville thoroughly depressed and grave. I noticed he did not look well and did not speak with his usual self-confidence. He was poring over a map and proceeded to explain to us why the military plans had been ill-conceived and how little allowance had been made for our weakness in the air. Besides, liaison with the French was bad. It would now be necessary to confine our activities to Narvik. Here I have recorded in my diary a curious incident. I received another telephone message from Downing Street on 1st May to go and see Neville at 4.30 that afternoon, together with Archie Sinclair.

The Prime Minister opened by asking me if I had advised Sir Archibald Sinclair over the telephone of the contents of his conversation with Crewe and myself. I replied that I had informed him we had had a talk, but I thought the information was far too serious to convey over the telephone and had only imparted its contents since he returned to town. The P.M. then proceeded to express indignation at a speech made by Archie at Edinburgh the previous night. Then he asked Sinclair if he was aware that his home at Caithness was in a prohibited area, that his telephone was tapped and that a conversation he had had with Harcourt Johnstone had been recorded and, I assume, reported to him. I thought at the time the conversation was most peculiar and was surprised that Archie took it all so calmly.

On the following day Chamberlain made a statement announcing the withdrawal of our troops from Norway. There was no debate, but there was a feeling of general depression in the House of Commons, though I noted in my diary, "The Prime Minister received a friendly reception from his supporters." But behind the scenes intrigue was rampant for a change of government, and though from my position I should have been consulted, for some reason or other I was kept out of it. Not that I did not think a change of government was necessary. On the contrary, I have noted in my diary that it was inevitable in the light of events: the only question was what form the change should take.

On 7th May there started a two days' debate on the war situation. Archie made a good speech, but the high-light of the debate was a remarkable performance by Amery. He was called during the dinner hour, the Speaker being, apparently, reluctant to call him, but he delivered a deadly attack, finishing with a quotation from Cromwell when he dismissed the Long Parliament: "You have

sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"

On the following day Herbert Morrison opened with a not very effective speech, and he was immediately followed by Chamberlain with what I described in my diary as "a carefully prepared impromptu," in which he took bitter exception to Morrison's speech as a personal attack, and appealed to his friends to stand by him. It had been arranged that Lloyd George was to speak that afternoon, but he was not in the Chamber, and I had to search him out and found him in his room upstairs. He had some doubt as to the wisdom of his intervening, but when I explained the character of Neville's speech and his personal appeal to "his friends," that seemed to decide him, and he came down to the House and delivered a slashing attack on the whole conduct of the war and called on Neville to sacrifice himself in order to win the war. Winston wound up for the Government and did not acquit himself too well. He took full responsibility for all that happened in Norway, and when Shinwell interrupted showed spleen and turned on the very people who wanted to make him Prime Minister.

The result of the voting was remarkable. The Government had sent out a special whip to its supporters, especially to those serving overseas, most of whom went out of their way to vote against them. Forty-two members listed as government supporters voted against, and their majority was reduced to eighty. This sealed the fate of Neville's government.

When a new government is formed there are always disappointments, and Churchill's was no exception to the rule. Archie Sinclair was offered the position of Secretary of State for Air but without membership of the War Cabinet. He consulted some of his friends, including Lord Crewe, Lord Samuel and myself, and we all thought that as he was leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party he should insist on the omission being rectified, and I think events proved we were right. As a compromise it was agreed he should be kept informed on all questions of high policy, but that is not the same thing as being in the Inner Cabinet.

Archie's name appeared in the preliminary list of ministers, but when the full list was published I was severely criticised for the character of the Liberal representation. But I had taken no part in the negotiations; in fact I was not even consulted by Archie, and the first I knew of the names of the Liberal ministers was when I read them in *The Times*. Several of my colleagues had special claims and qualifications to be included. Graham White had been a junior minister in 1931, had a wide knowledge of social problems and was respected by members on all sides. Kingsley Griffith, too, would have made an excellent minister: he was one

of the best speakers in the House and had a good parliamentary style.

What was resented by my colleagues was not so much that they had not been included, but that it had been thought necessary to go outside to find a Liberal to fill a ministerial post. Harcourt Johnstone was appointed Minister of Overseas Trade: by no stretch of the imagination could he be called a business expert and he had not even a seat in the House of Commons. I have never been given an explanation, but I am satisfied I can find the right one. "Crinks," as he was familiarly called by his intimates, and he had many, was Archie's greatest friend: they had both been at Eton, and they shot and fished together. Harcourt Johnstone was the son of a diplomat and he had helped Archie with his speeches. When I became Chief Whip I automatically became chairman of the Liberal Central, but at Archie's special request I allowed Harcourt Johnstone to remain and run that office though it was really my prerogative.

But there was another explanation of his selection for special favour. Churchill was the presiding genius of a dining club, "The Other Club." Archie and "Crinks" were both members and so were Hugh Seely (now Lord Sherwood) and Jimmie Rothschild: both of whom ultimately got junior ministerial posts.

But it must not be thought that Harcourt Johnstone was without ability. On the contrary, he had a very good mind and he was a convinced Liberal. I know for a fact he was offered a good Tory seat if he would only call himself National, but he spurned the suggestion as an insult. I think he might well be described as the last of the Whigs. A tall, well-built man, with a grand style, he could easily be said to be the best-dressed man in the House of Commons, and was reputed to have more waistcoats than anyone else. He was an epicure and a great judge of wine and food, and gave most marvellous dinners. The ordinary member of Parliament did not understand him: his rather off-hand manner gave him the reputation of cynicism, though he really had a heart of gold and was capable of acts of great generosity. I believe he was excellent at his departmental work but I cannot honestly say he was a success on the Treasury Bench. The young Tories took pleasure in ragging him and asking him awkward questions, but to do him credit he gave as good as he received. He was no mere politician but was a man of wide culture. He was a good judge of pictures and was one of the first collectors to discover the painter Mathew Smith. He was very keen on racing and never missed Ascot, except perhaps for the short time he was a minister. He looked a strong, healthy man, but he really suffered a lot from ill-health, and that explains some of his peculiarities. His sudden death came as a shock to his

friends. I doubt if there will ever be seen the like of him again. If I have dwelt at some length on his qualities it is because he was somewhat different from other men in public life.

Another man who did not live long to enjoy high office was Kingsley Wood. I knew him long before he achieved success. I was on the L.C.C. with him for some years, though he made no particular mark there. He first caught the public attention by his criticism of L.G.'s Health Insurance Act. Then he achieved nuisance value by putting inconvenient questions to ministers during the Labour Government. Neville Chamberlain took him up and he became his loyal understudy at the Ministry of Health. He was in turn Minister of Health and Secretary of State for Air, but no one considered he possessed outstanding abilities: his success consisted in his always being calm and imperturbable. Nothing would put him out and however strong the attack might be upon his policy, he would nod and smile and look quite unconcerned. When he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer by Churchill at a time of the highest expenditure on record, everyone was surprised. He had the reputation of knowing nothing about finance and I don't think he pretended to. He was a poor speaker, with a thin voice, and he generally read his speeches, sticking closely to his briefs. But he was clever enough to choose first-class advisers and had the wisdom to be guided by them. He was a good listener and though he would not lightly make a concession, he had a way of bringing his critics together in his private room and meeting them half-way.

He was a general favourite and essentially a House of Commons man, and the tributes paid to him on his death were quite genuine and sincere.

One other man I should like to mention here is David Margesson. He was Chief Whip in 1935 when I took over the same position for the Liberals. He had the reputation of being a tough proposition, but I found him an excellent man to work with, very straight, never taking an unfair advantage of the opposition. Many of his own party could not bear him and looked upon him as a bully. He regarded himself as the sergeant-major whose duty it was to carry out the orders of his chief, and anybody on his own side who went into the wrong lobby he considered deserved to be carpeted and treated rough. You were either for the Government or against; there was no half-way house with him. He often used to come to my room, both before and after the outbreak of war, when we would have frank talks about men and affairs, and I always found him reliable. When he became Secretary of State for War he handled the House with skill, and when he presented his estimates, L. G. remarked to me that he had never seen a Minister make a

better Army statement. Winston asked him if he could suggest anyone outside Parliament who might make a good Minister. David Margesson suggested the name of P.J. Grigg, who was then permanent secretary at the War Office and had been Winston's private secretary when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. A week or two afterwards Margesson was asked to resign, but was not informed who was to be his successor, and to his amazement his own permanent secretary, a civil servant, was appointed in his place, and to do him justice no one was more surprised than Grigg himself.

But to hark back to the formation of the Churchill Government in May, 1940. Margesson asked me to come and see him, and explained that he and Charles Edwards were to be joint Patronage Secretaries to the Treasury (i.e., Chief Whips), each to draw £3,000 a year. He pointed out that, as representing the third partner to the National Government, I had the right to claim similar status and salary. I told him to rule me out: I had no desire to be reduced to silence, which would be my fate if I became a Government Whip. However, Winston Churchill was good enough to think I should have had some recognition, and when the final list was published a curious paragraph was appended, "Sir Percy Harris, who is Chief Whip of the Liberal Parliamentary Party and is acting as their deputy chairman, has agreed, at the express wish of the Prime Minister, to continue his work on the Select Committee of National Expenditure of which he is now acting chairman." At the time Wardlaw-Milne was absent in South Africa.

One day I was talking to Churchill in the smoking-room when he suddenly turned to me and said he would like to recommend me to the King to be a member of the Privy Council. Had I any objection? I naturally replied that I would be honoured. The next thing I heard was my name was on the tape. I did not get his official letter until a day or two afterwards.

Membership of the Privy Council does not signify much to the public outside but great importance is attached to it inside Parliament. It has become an almost unwritten rule that the honour is only conferred on members who have reached ministerial rank. No powers are left with the Privy Council except of a nominal character, but it brings with it the right to the prefix "Right Honourable," is supposed to give the member some priority in catching the Speaker's eye, and Ministers feel if a man is a member of the Privy Council he is entitled to receive confidential information.

For five years from the formation of the Churchill Government I combined the position of acting leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons with that of Chief Whip. Hugh Seeley, who was my chief assistant Whip, became Under Secretary of State for Air, while Wilfred Roberts, who was my second assistant, became

Parliamentary Private Secretary to Archie Sinclair, and afterwards chairman of the Organisation Committee of the Party, so neither of them were available. I, therefore, became a regular Poo Bah, especially as before long I took over the active chairmanship of the Liberal Central Association as well as the direction of the Post-War Policy Committee. I have already mentioned that I was treasurer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. But I managed to do other jobs in the House. It had been customary for Ministers from time to time to address members of their own party, but now that we had a real National Government, such meetings upstairs of a private character could not be limited to Conservatives. Margesson asked me to arrange an All-Party Committee to organise such meetings. I got together representatives of the Conservatives, Labour, the two wings of the Liberals, National Labour and Independents, and they formed an all-party panel which elected me chairman. We arranged many meetings which were addressed not only by Ministers but by Ambassadors and distinguished visitors.

One of the most successful of these meetings was addressed by Mr. Maisky, the Russian Ambassador, when he expressed a special desire to have an opportunity to explain Russian policy to Members of Parliament. When he relinquished his post here he wrote me a charming letter of thanks. It came to be regarded as an honour to be invited by the All-Party Panel. But what was more satisfactory about these private meetings was that though they were attended by members of every shade of opinion, nothing ever leaked out to the Press as to what our speakers had said, though on more than one occasion they gave us information of the most confidential character.

I am afraid all this sounds a bit egotistical, but while I am on my activities during those war years, I should add that I spoke on all formal occasions for my party in the House, such as the death of a member of the Royal Family or of a Minister. In addition, I either followed or preceded the Prime Minister on the first day of the session on the Address, and I generally took part in debates on foreign affairs. I represented, too, my party on the Privilege Committee, in fact did all the jobs generally associated with the leadership of a party, and which hitherto had been done by Sir Archibald Sinclair before he became Secretary of State for Air.

The Liberal Party outside the House expected me to discharge the duty of criticism: on the other hand, Liberal Ministers were anxious that I should say nothing which would embarrass them in their position as members of the Government: Ministers were all smiles and kindness when I praised them, but when I indulged in criticism, however mild, I was always reminded that it was a National Government. We had four members of the party in the

Government: Lloyd George rarely came, and as his health deteriorated I could not look to him for help. First Wilfred Roberts and afterwards Geoffrey Mander became a Parliamentary Private Secretary. Hadyn Jones was old and sick and only turned up about half a dozen times during the war, and so I had to rely on less than a dozen members to do the work of the House. However, somehow or other, the party did function and gave a good account of itself.

1940 was the blackest year in the war. If I do not dwell at undue length on its history it is because most of its events are fresh in people's memories or are recorded at length in official documents. But I am sure in May and June of that year the nation did not realise the dire peril we were in. The British suffer from incorrigible optimism which stands them in good stead when defeat stares them in the face. The common people never doubted we would pull through, but there was a small section in high places that took quite another view. There were talks in the lobby of moving both the Fleet and the Government to Canada, and in the light of the facts of the situation there was some justification for this view. The retreat from Dunkirk and the evacuation by sea of a great army by small ships was little short of a miracle. If we had had bad weather it would have been impossible to accomplish. We had left the whole of our equipment and stores behind and this country was bare of tanks, big guns and even rifles. If Hitler had been sea-minded the results might have been very different.

It is now common knowledge that at the opening days of the war, arrangements had been made in every detail for the evacuation of Parliament from London in case of heavy air raids. Each member was supplied with luggage labels and allotted an assembly point, while lodgings had been allocated to every one of us. I understand Stratford-on-Avon was to have been the centre of government. When Winston took over, I sent a message to him through Margesson expressing a hope that these plans would be abandoned as I was satisfied nothing would have worse reaction on the people of London in particular, and the British Commonwealth as a whole, than if we were to leave the capital. In due course I received satisfactory assurances: Churchill had made up his mind that on no account should we change the seat of government. Churchill will always have his critics, but I am satisfied his iron nerve, coupled with his brilliant oratory, did much to rally the nation and pull through the critical months of that year.

Rather appropriately, on or about 5th November, anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, it was decided to have an alternative meeting place for Parliament in London other than at the Palace of Westminster. Fortunately, a suitable building was available.

Church House, headquarters of the Church Assembly in Dean's Yard, had recently been rebuilt in brick and ferro-concrete and was as bomb and fire resisting as could be devised. It is rather inconveniently designed as regards committee rooms and offices, but the Office of Works had converted in five days a large room into something like a replica of the old chamber in which the House of Commons met before it was burnt down in 1834.

On 7th November, as an experiment, Parliament met there, the first meeting outside the Palace of Westminster for close on a century. I note in my diary: "Everything went smoothly and without a hitch, with the mace on the table and the Speaker with his chaplain at prayers. A more intimate affair—more like a meeting in a grand committee room. Members talkative, and more supplementary questions than usual."

It was very good we did make that experiment, as, of course, the chamber of the House of Commons did receive a direct hit and was completely gutted.

Members never took to this temporary building: accommodation was inconvenient, there was no library, and it was difficult to find anywhere for them to do their correspondence.

The House of Lords, generously, with the approval of the Lord Great Chamberlain, placed their chamber at our disposal, and for the rest of that Parliament we met in their gilded splendour and sat on their red benches. The Woolsack and the Throne were moved and the Speaker's chair placed at the other end, and except for the greater magnificence and the better ventilation, it was difficult to distinguish it from our own chamber.

While I am on this subject, I might mention here I was on the committee appointed to consider plans for the rebuilding of the old House.

Evidence was given by Mr. Speaker Clifton Brown, and the Chairman of Ways and Means, Major Milner, in favour of a slight increase in the size of the old House, by the addition of one row of benches on each side which would have provided additional seats for another fifty-two members. I supported this proposal, but it was stoutly resisted by the majority of the members on the committee, including the Labour members.

In the old chamber there was only seating accommodation for about 350, though there were over 600 members: twenty-five additional members were elected under the Act passed before the last dissolution. The theory is that it is only on rare occasions that the House of Commons is full, and by keeping the chamber small the intimate atmosphere and debating character of the proceedings are retained. Once it is enlarged to provide seats for every member, the place would become a forum and the speeches

would be addressed to the gallery. The slight addition that I supported would have meant the retention of the essential features of the old House, but would have given just that additional room that is required when there is a good attendance of members. There was even opposition to additional accommodation for the public, though slight additional gallery space has been provided. I want to see more interest in and understanding of the proceedings of Parliament by those who have the responsibility for its composition, i.e., the electors, and every encouragement should be given to the public to attend. At present, every difficulty is put in the way of strangers, and when they do get a seat it is made as uncomfortable as possible, and it is difficult both to see and hear members from the public galleries.

The new chamber, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert-Scott, will be a fine example of Tudor architecture and promises to be better lit and ventilated than its predecessor, but I am satisfied it could have been somewhat increased in size without sacrificing its essential features.

In the 1940 September number of the *Contemporary Review* they featured an article by me on industry after the war. I wrote: "Do not let anyone be under the illusion that industry will glide back to pre-war conditions. . . . For a couple of years after the last war there was a trade boom, with high wages for the workers and good profits for the employers. But it was short-lived and was followed by an appalling slump. Hundreds of business men were driven into bankruptcy by the collapse of prices, and millions of workers thrown out of employment. The industrial system has never quite recovered from that blow. It did more to discredit capitalism than all the theories of Karl Marx and Socialist writers put together. . . . But even if a war-weary world, disillusioned by State interference, is content to see national economy drift back to 1939 conditions, I am satisfied it will not be possible. A national economy concentrated on war cannot suddenly be switched over to peaceful production. It is true that the world will be short of every kind of commodity and the demand will be there. But credit will be disorganised and it will be difficult immediately to redistribute raw materials and guide them back to the ordinary channels of trade."

I pleaded among other things for the immediate establishment of an Economic General Staff to think out remedies for post-war problems. I also argued that the workers must be made to feel that they were partners in the economic life of the nation and made to share in both the responsibilities and the profits.

"No longer," I wrote, "can we have two nations in our industrial life—gentlemen going out of one door and players out of the

other." I concluded by saying that private enterprise and personal initiative must be preserved in the new industrial order or there will be stagnation and sterility; but security and stability must go with them. That article was written just about five years before the General Election of 1945.

That autumn I proceeded to form a committee to work out plans for the post-war world. Those present at the preliminary meeting included the late Ramsay Muir, Geoffrey Crowther, Seebohm Rowntree, D. O. Evans, M.P., Graham White, M.P., and Professor Carr. All agreed on the necessity of such a committee but the difficulty was to find the economists and get the necessary expert advice. Almost every economist of distinction had been taken by the Government and was working in one department or another, and it was almost impossible to obtain staff even if we had had unlimited money available. Fortunately, Seebohm Rowntree threw himself whole-heartedly into the proposal, placed at my disposal the whole of his time and his small expert staff as well as his own experience.

I acted as general director of the inquiry and had the help of my friend Sir John Stewart-Wallace, formerly head of the Land Registry, and we gradually built up an organisation though all the time seriously handicapped by want of staff and money, and dependent on voluntary help.

Spread over four years we set up some sixteen committees which inquired into every phase of industrial life. During the last three years I had the active co-operation of the Liberal Party organisation, which appointed representatives on the main committee, and the reports became subject to the approval of the Liberal Party Assembly. But I had the responsibility of finding suitable persons to make the investigation, and write the reports. Seebohm Rowntree took on the responsibility for some of the most difficult problems and put in a tremendous amount of work with his usual thoroughness. Of course we had our critics, but they were usually those who were least willing to make any substantial contribution to our labours. Some of the subjects are worth mentioning, and they included education, housing, public health, agriculture, international trade, money and banking, and the relation of the state to industry.

We set up an excellent committee under the chairmanship of Lord Perth to deal with foreign affairs, and it included among its members Professor Gilbert Murray, Sir Philip Gibbs and Sir Andrew McFadyean.

The reports were all published and made available to the public, and had considerable circulation. The chief criticism I heard of them was that they were dull and no use for propaganda. But

they were meant to be a serious contribution to post-war problems, and as that they must be judged.

Both the Conservative and Labour Parties set up similar committees, but I think our committee was the first to get going.

Some surprise may be expressed that when the nation was engaged in fighting for its very existence I could be thinking of post-war problems. Perhaps it was my incorrigible optimism that, when things were going badly for Great Britain, and when except for the Dominions we were fighting alone, I never doubted we should pull through.

I realised at the time there was nothing to justify that belief. On the contrary, at the end of 1940 facts were all against us. Russia was reiterating her determination to keep neutral. On 12th November, 1940, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Secretary, actually visited Berlin accompanied by a large staff, and was received by Ribbentrop with two flags flying side by side—the swastika and the hammer and sickle. It was recorded that Molotov had an official interview with no less a person than the great Hitler himself. In other words, there was not the slightest sign of any break between those two countries.

Though we had a good friend in President Roosevelt, isolation was at that time rampant in the U.S.A.

Nor by any stretch of the imagination could the war, at the end of 1940, be said to be going well for us. On the contrary, the last months of that year saw the Battle of Britain. The September day raids proved a great triumph for the Spitfires and their pilots, and was hailed then and since as a British victory. But the night raids went on all through the winter and did tremendous damage to London.

Over Christmas the London office of my New Zealand family business was completely obliterated. You could not even trace the lines of the street where it was situated. Bethnal Green got it in the neck in most of the raids. On 18th April, 1941, I have this in my diary: "I went to Bethnal Green. Turin Street and the narrow lanes and alleys I have canvassed and walked through during the last thirty years in an awful mess and most of the wretched houses, long overdue for clearance, reduced to rubble and dust. Rescue work still going on but little hope of the buried being dug out, but some marvellous escapes. Visited the rest centres and found people quite content to be alive, though they had lost their all. A general cheerfulness and absence of complaint."

The raids of 1944 were bad and did an immense amount of damage, but we were less prepared at the end of 1940 and in the early months of 1941. They were far noisier in those mass raids. It was not so much due to the bombs dropping but the use of the

naval guns that made a noise quite out of proportion to their effectiveness, and were very nerve-racking. Often would I try to get to the House of Commons and find transport completely disorganised.

But London carried on with its ordinary work and so did the House of Commons. The fact that we had a job of work to do did make it easier to face up to air raids. I was going about the country with my naval sub-committee during week-ends, and the House sat as usual during the week and carried on with its business.

Nor can I say there was anything to be specially joyful about in the North African campaign. Wavell's first campaign was a success, but it was followed by a serious set-back in Greece and Crete with heavy losses both to the Army and the Navy, and in which the inadequate strength of our Air Force was clearly revealed.

On 21st June, 1941, I was staying down near Southampton at an hotel. I had come down to see my son Nicholas who was in command of a small ship which was being fitted out for service. All was quiet and peaceful and then about midnight the sirens went and we had a terrific air raid, bombs dropping all around us and doing a lot of damage.

On the following afternoon, Sunday, 22nd June, came the astonishing news of the invasion of Russia by Germany. Everyone was completely taken by surprise. Then, that afternoon, we heard Churchill's declaration. I think, considering the circumstances, that speech of his was the finest he made during the war. It was not only the content of it but the clear and decisive statement of support. If there had been any hesitation or delay it would have made all the difference. The people listening at that hotel were mostly middle-class, frightened of Russia and Communism, but Churchill's lead heartened all of us and gave the nation a real new ally and broke our isolation.

The proper appraisal of the German invasion of Russia in 1941 has yet to be written. The invading armies at first carried all before them and the resistance was almost negligible.

Many well-informed public men did not think the Russians could hold out for more than three months, and others estimated that at most they could survive the winter.

I believe the historian will say that Winston Churchill's clear and definite promise of active help had much to do with the stoutness of the Russian resistance.

And there was something magnificent in his gesture.

He hated Communism and everything it stood for, but he swallowed all his prejudices, conscious that however hateful its doctrines might be to him, they were a lesser evil than the Nazi threat to civilisation. But if Great Britain alone had promised help



Sir Percy Harris in Canada at the Empire Parliamentary Conference, with Lord Marchwood and Sir John Wardlaw-Milne (seated) and Neil Maclean (standing right)

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Portrait of Lady Harris.
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I doubt if it could have been effective. President Roosevelt could claim equal credit. Our resources were not great enough and were too badly needed by ourselves to have been adequate.

It was fortunate that these two masterful men understood and liked each other. It would not have been surprising if they had been antipathetic: both liked to have their own way and were impatient of criticism, but somehow or other they worked in complete harmony.

After Churchill's first meeting with Roosevelt at Washington, he happened to be lunching in the House of Commons. I came into the dining-room a bit late and found Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, in my seat at the adjoining table. I complained and told him to go to his proper place at the Ministers' table. Winston, hearing the conversation, invited me to come over and sit with him. I at first refused as the Ministers' table is regarded as sacrosanct, but he insisted and, as a result, I had an amusing conversation. I asked him how he got on with Roosevelt, and he replied, "Almost too well. In fact," he said, "we were always in and out of each other's rooms. He caught me," he explained, "one morning with nothing on but my bath towel."

This was more than confirmed by Harry Hopkins when he visited London and spoke to us upstairs.

It was a big factor in Russia's resistance that these two men understood each other and were at one in rushing supplies to our sorely tried ally. Memories are short and there are some people now who speak and write as though Russia drove out the invader single-handed.

I am quite sure that neither Hitler nor his advisers calculated on the help Russia would receive from both branches of the English-speaking people.

Whilst I am on Churchill's meeting with Roosevelt, in the summer of 1941, I should like to refer to its direct outcome, the Atlantic Charter.

Somehow or other that great document has faded into the background. In the debate in which Churchill reported the results of the conference on 9th September, I pleaded that the Charter should be endorsed by Parliament and inscribed in the journals of the House. Perhaps in the light of recent discussion on the economic relations between America and ourselves, I may be forgiven for quoting a paragraph from that speech. "After the last war every obstacle was placed in the way of economic recovery, not only of our enemies but of our friends. Quotas, exchange restrictions and every ingenious device that men could think of, were introduced to make it difficult for countries to exchange their goods. Europe has been divided for centuries by old racial and

religious antipathies. There will be a terrible temptation after this war, as there was after the last war, to use the economic weapon to continue these old blood feuds. We English-speaking people, whether in America, in the Dominions or in our own country, must be prepared to set an example in economic co-operation by showing our readiness to break down all unnecessary barriers to trade."

I was influenced in calling for the endorsement by Parliament of the Charter by the fact that though it was hailed in the country with enthusiasm, there was more than one hostile critic from the Conservative benches of its provisions, who viewed the whole document with suspicion, especially clauses 4 and 5, which are as follow:

"iv. They will endeavour, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms to the trade and the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.

"v. They desire to bring about fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security."

I should have thought these excellent sentiments would have been generally approved, but apparently I was wrong.

Churchill himself would find no objection to them. He has never quite forgotten his Liberal associations and his Free Trade beliefs, and in consequence reacted favourably to these two clauses.

Towards the end of Autumn 1941, there was considerable criticism of the Government and it was by no means confined to the Labour and Liberal Parties. On the contrary, much of it came from Conservative back benchers.

In these days a session of Parliament comes to an end in the late autumn and a new one opens generally some time in November.

In the opening day, 1st November, 1941, on the debate on the Address thanking His Majesty for his gracious speech as is customary, I immediately preceded the Prime Minister. I went out of my way to praise him, but said, "The common people swear by him, though they still claim the right, it is true, to swear at his Government." I asked him not to be too sensitive to criticism, which is "the very life-blood of democracy." But this was not at all to Winston's liking.

There has always been a certain arrogance in his make-up,

which I think had something to do with his failure to appreciate the trend of public opinion in 1945.

The year 1941 ended, as everyone knows, by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the entry of the U.S.A. into the war. The House of Commons on Monday, 8th December, was summoned to a special meeting to mark the occasion. After speeches by the Prime Minister followed by Lees Smith on behalf of the Labour Party, I spoke and pointed out that, "the war has now stretched to two hemispheres, and will be over four continents and seven seas. I had hoped that the New World might have been spared some of the horrors of war. Now, the coasts of our Dominions, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, will be inside the fighting line. The Pacific is no longer a safe sea for our shipping and obviously that must interfere with our supplies to North Africa and the Red Sea. I emphasise this because there are some—I have already heard it—who think that now the U.S.A. is in the shooting war, our obligations and dangers are lessened, but, of course, the exact contrary is the case. . . . More and more we should be thrown on our own resources. We must, therefore, close our ranks and show our solidarity behind the Government. More than ever this is a struggle between civilisation and barbarism, and I have no doubt that civilisation will win."

With the entry of America into the war, the Foreign Office approached Mr. Lees Smith, who was then leading the Labour Party, and myself with a suggestion that we might co-operate in forming a British American Association. A meeting was called in a committee room and it met with immediate response.

I have never found members more interested in the formation of a committee. I moved that Walter Elliot, as an ex-Cabinet Minister, should take the chair, but for some reason or other objection was taken to his selection and it was suggested that it was a put-up job. Lady Astor was there and claimed that Walter knew nothing of America, but received the reply that he had half a dozen cousins in Texas. Lord Winterton, who can hardly be described as an appeaser, joined in the discussion, questioned whether proper notice had been given of the meeting or the election of officers: all this added to the fun, but was evidence of the great interest members were taking in America. The meeting, therefore, was postponed and another meeting was called when those present insisted on a proper ballot both for officers and committee. In the end, Walter Elliot was elected chairman, Lord Snell and myself vice-chairmen, and Captain Wakefield and Aneurin Bevan secretaries.

One of the first meetings convened was to hear an address

from Mr. Winant, the new American Ambassador, and the committee did provide a forum for distinguished visitors from the U.S.A. But the real aim of the committee was to bring about direct contact between Parliament and Congress. It was felt that if the elected representatives of the two English-speaking democracies could occasionally get together, it would both bring about better understanding and closer co-operation.

It sounded such a sensible and obvious proposition that members could not appreciate the slow progress made to achieve this most desirable end. First, it was difficult for British Members of Parliament either to get the visas to travel to the U.S.A., or the necessary dollars. When the position did get easier, some of us did visit Washington and sounded Congressmen on the idea. We always received a friendly welcome and sympathetic hearing. In fact, I was assured by a number of them that they would like nothing better than to make direct personal contact with elected representatives, independent of the executives. But there was always some obstacle in the way: either feeling was running high, or a particular issue made it inauspicious, or there was an election either on or pending.

In 1944 we did persuade Mr. Speaker and the Lord Chancellor, after much searching of heart, that the time was opportune to send an invitation from the British Parliament to the Congress of the U.S.A. to send representatives to London. I plead guilty to playing a big part in persuading the authorities here that such an invitation would be accepted. Every precaution was taken to sound opinion at the Capitol whether such an invitation would receive a favourable reception, and we were assured that it would be welcomed.

The formalities were complied with, resolutions were moved and carried unanimously in both the Commons and the Lords and sent officially to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Vice-president of the United States as Speaker of the Senate, inviting both Houses to send representatives. The invitation was acknowledged and sympathetically received, but it brought no result. No one is more conscious of the difficulties than I am, but whatever the right machinery might be to bring about the desired result, I am convinced nothing would contribute more to the well-being of mankind than direct contact between these two great democracies, and this can best be achieved through their elected representatives meeting at regular intervals. I shall have more to say about America when I write about my official visit in the summer of 1943.

Meanwhile, in spite of Great Britain in 1942 having the support of two powerful allies in that year, there was considerable criticism

of the conduct of the war, which culminated in a vote of censure on 1st July. The debate was opened by Wardlaw-Milne, one of the most orthodox Conservatives in the House of Commons and Chairman of the Select Committee on Expenditure, and the very embodiment of respectability. He found himself in strange company with left-wing Socialists such as Aneurin Bevan. Wardlaw-Milne's speech was a sober and a well-reasoned criticism of the Government, but he spoilt it by the astounding proposition that the war would be more efficiently run if the Duke of Gloucester was made commander-in-chief. It completely destroyed the effect of the speech, and made it easy for Winston to carry the House with him.

Aneurin Bevan was one of the few back benchers who won fame in this war Parliament. He excelled in attacking Churchill and never hesitated to hit him and hit him hard. If Churchill had either ignored him or kept his temper these attacks would have been ineffective. But he always showed resentment at criticism. Some harmless back bencher of little account would say something disparaging about the Government, and he would immediately win fame by the Prime Minister showing his spleen. Aneurin Bevan owes much of his success to this bear-baiting.

But to do Bevan justice, he by no means limited his attack to Churchill. He stood up valiantly to Ernie Bevin and vigorously fought the Bill to stop unauthorised strikes during the war, in spite of the support it received from the T.U.C. That showed real courage.

I knew Aneurin Bevan well. He often lunched at my table and is real good company and has the courage of his opinions. He has yet to prove his capacity as an administrator. It is one thing to make good speeches, but quite another to run a big department. His first success in debate was an attack on Lloyd George, and he has much in common with his fellow-countryman.

Many of the debates in 1942 and 1943 were held in secret sessions. I was always opposed to having them except for very exceptional reasons. Sometimes they were held at the initiative of the Government itself, but more often at the request of private members. The speeches are not recorded, and under standing orders members are strictly prohibited, even obliquely, from referring to what took place at them. But it is always difficult to memorise speeches, and even if you could it would not be much use, as we were not allowed to quote or make use of the information.

The idea of these sessions was to elicit information or for the Government to give facts and figures that it was not in the public interest that the enemy should have. But looking back over these secret sessions I recall that Ministers very rarely revealed anything

of a confidential character. There was a great sense of unreality about them, and except that they sometimes gave private members an opportunity to blow off steam I consider they served little useful purpose.

Perhaps this is the appropriate place to say something about Sir William Beveridge and his report on social insurance, as he and his policy were to play such a big part in my political fortunes.

It is sometimes forgotten by his friends and foes alike that he was appointed by Arthur Greenwood, when Minister without Portfolio in 1941, chairman of a committee to inquire into the whole system of insurance against sickness, accident and unemployment. The committee was not constituted on political lines, but was composed of civil servants and experts who took a purely objective line.

I think the Government expected the usual dull departmental document, but Beveridge could not touch anything without putting his personality into it, and his literary gifts always made his reports readable. Instead of the report receiving the usual fate of such government publications and being pigeon-holed and forgotten, it became a best-seller. When, therefore, the Government followed the general practice and treated the report as an excuse for delay in taking action, Ministers were met by great public pressure to carry out the reforms recommended.

The report made a special appeal to Liberals. The principle of insurance against sickness and unemployment had been the child of the Liberal Party, and it had originally been given legislative form against the wishes of the other two parties.

Resolutions in favour of the report were carried by the party organisation in the spirit of "the report, the whole report, and nothing but the report."

The Liberal Parliamentary Party gave Beveridge a dinner at Brown's Hotel, over which I presided, to celebrate the publication of the report. The dinner synchronised with his marriage and he was just like an overgrown schoolboy on his honeymoon and it was a very happy and delightful affair. He explained in his speech that for a great part of his life he had been a civil servant, that he had never belonged to any political party, but if he had to describe his approach to problems it would be a Liberal with a Radical outlook.

But it was not "roses, roses all the way" for Beveridge. He had his enemies and critics both among the Conservative and Labour Parties.

Some of us pressed for a debate in order to ascertain the Government attitude, and after considerable delay facilities were granted. It is customary on such occasions to place a motion on the order

paper approving the report. On 10th February, 1943, such a motion was brought to me by the Government Whip. Arthur Greenwood's name was appended to it and I was asked to add mine, but the motion was couched in such non-committal terms that it looked like postponing action indefinitely, and I refused until I had the opportunity of consulting my colleagues. The same afternoon was the usual weekly party meeting and I was supported in my attitude, which caused something of a sensation in the lobbies. I had consistently and persistently supported the National Government during the preceding three years, often even against my better judgment because I held strongly that in the war we should show national unity.

But here was a case of high principle: the report had captured the popular imagination and if the nation thought its recommendations were to be indefinitely postponed, it would badly react on its morale. So great was the interest on the issue that three days were allocated to the debate. Sir John Anderson spoke on the first day and was not very convincing: he showed obvious alarm at the cost of the scheme. He was very much interrupted from the Labour benches, and did not add to the good effect of his speech by reading most of it, a growing habit of Ministers in recent years. Poor Kingsley Wood did not improve matters the next day by stressing the counter-claims of civil aviation, housing and education. I was very anxious not to vote against the Government, and if I could have had any assurance that the Government meant business, I certainly should not have done so. Herbert Morrison wound up for the Government in a skilful debating speech, but when I interrupted to ask whether the Government contemplated legislation he refused to make any promise. The result was both Lloyd George and myself went into the lobby against the Government. In any case, it was not merely a personal matter. The feeling among Liberals throughout the country was so strongly in favour of the report that I felt I had a definite obligation to them to express their views.

All through 1942 and 1943 most of my spare time was occupied with the Liberal Post-War Enquiry. I presided myself over a committee that investigated the relation of the State to industry. We saw a great number of witnesses and received a considerable conflict of evidence. More and more the division was growing between the planners and the anti-planners, those who wished the State to play a big part in guiding industry and those who would leave it completely alone. Some of the best economists were reluctant, owing to their official positions, to give evidence before my committee, but I got over that by organising a series of small dinners or lunches when we would talk round the table and discuss

our problems. We spent many months over this subject and sometimes feelings ran high, which was all to the good. It is far better to have things out than to let them simmer underground. What dominated the whole of our investigation was the need to find a solution for unemployment. No doubt if you were prepared to ignore human reactions it would be simpler to return to *laissez-faire* and allow the weak to go to the wall and the strong to get to the front. But none of us were prepared to accept that principle, and in the end the planners won with adequate safeguards against undue interference. I commend the *State and Industry* report, which had a long and painful accouchement, to my readers.

On 3rd February, 1943, Captain FitzRoy, the Speaker, died. I was, personally, very fond of him. He was by nature a shy and reserved man and he wanted a lot of knowing and it was difficult to get behind the crust. Once you did, you found in him a very human and delightful person. He was a high Tory in his outlook and found it very difficult to swallow some of the opinions ventilated in the House. But so great is the tradition of his office and so essentially fair-minded was his character that never once did I see him allow his own opinions to influence his judgment in the chair.

There are very few precedents for a Speaker dying in office, and his death put the House rather in a quandary, and it could not carry on until a new Speaker was elected. The name of Gwilym Lloyd George, L.G.'s son, was canvassed for the position and I found he would have liked to have had it. He had most of the qualifications requisite for the post, a tall, commanding personality, a knowledge of the standing orders, a dry and caustic wit and general personal popularity. I did my best to promote his claim, but his party alignment was against him. It is the general custom for the party with the largest numbers to claim the nomination, and Colonel Clifton Brown had considerable qualifications. First, he was Chairman of Ways and Means, though that does not necessarily carry with it a right to the speakership when it is vacant; secondly, he was personally popular and had no enemies, the strongest qualification of all. Clifton Brown is a very lovable man, simple, easy of approach and completely without side. I rather doubted whether he would prove strong enough to rule over a rowdy House or one composed of inexperienced members, but from all I hear, he is carrying the House elected in 1945 with him by his obvious sincerity and honesty of purpose.

In the summer of 1943 I was approached by the Empire Parliamentary Association and asked to go to a conference at Ottawa with representatives of the Dominions. I at first declined,

as I was full up with engagements and particularly wanted to see through some of the reports of my post-war committee, but Archie Sinclair pressed me to go, particularly as there was a Liberal Government in Canada, and it was important, therefore, that we should be well represented. In the end I accepted, and I never regretted the experience. There was much mystery about the time and place of sailing. The security people exercised the utmost caution. All we were told was that our party must meet at Euston on a particular day and time, and our tickets would be taken for us.

The party included my old friend Wedgwood Benn, well camouflaged under the title of Lord Stansgate, Lord Marchwood, formerly George Penny, a Tory Whip, also my friend Wardlaw-Milne, Chairman of the Expenditure Committee, Mrs. Tate, and several others.

The secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association was at Euston Station, and all we could get from him was that he understood we were travelling on a small slow steamer and that we should have to share cabins. We spent the night at Glasgow and then were taken to Greenock where we boarded a tug, still under the impression that we were going by a small ship. Then out of the mist loomed the hull of a tremendous steamer, but it was not until we boarded her that we were informed we were going by the largest passenger ship in the world—the *Queen Elizabeth*.

I enjoyed that trip across the Atlantic. Most of the ship's peace-time furniture and decorations had been removed at the beginning of the war, when she made her maiden voyage secretly and mysteriously without any warning even to her crew. But I like a ship to be a ship, and not a floating hotel. The *Queen Elizabeth* is as steady as a rock and she pushes her great hulk through the waves without any vibration or noise.

In those days, coming home to Great Britain she was packed with troops like sardines, and meals were served in relays. But going out to America there was no undue pressure on the accommodation. Meals were excellent—simple plain fare, but abundant and no rationing, plenty of butter, meat and fruit. The passengers were interesting, either returning Servicemen or persons with some sort of mission, such as a group of agricultural experts or technicians. The black-out was a nuisance but, being summer-time, the days were long and the nights short. We took all the time a zig-zag course. The captain had submarines spotted, and they in turn had us mapped out all the time. The *Queen Elizabeth* crossed always unescorted, except when she neared the coast when she was met by planes. The captain preferred to rely on the ship's speed and armaments, which were considerable. Half-way across, the gunners

amused themselves by firing at icebergs. No one would tell us what port we were making for, in fact I am not sure the captain himself knew until we were close to the American coast. The general impression was that we were making for Halifax, and this was confirmed by the northern course we were steering. But one morning we woke up to find ourselves off the entrance to the Hudson River. I had been three times at New York, but the last time was 1910, and I had always approached it from the land side. Thousands have written their first impressions of the city of skyscrapers, but I know I was simply overwhelmed, not so much by the size and height of the towering buildings of which I had heard so much and seen so many pictures, but, in perspective, by their singular beauty and wonderful colour.

There is something in the dry, clean atmosphere of New York that gives its architecture an attraction that other modern cities lack. There is nothing vulgar or offensive in their extravagance. There is a certain dignity about most of these buildings, though they are designed and built in a purely commercial spirit. Coming, too, from London, drab and dirty after four years of war, explained somewhat my favourable impression. I did not realise how our own buildings lacked paint until I put my foot on American soil. Everything looked bright and fresh. Americans, anyhow, are not afraid to use colour, and their bright taxis, sparkling in the sun, buzzed about the street like fireflies. On our arrival I only stayed at New York one day, but on my way home I remained there some days and every moment I was thrilled by the life and movement of the city.

An amusing incident I must record. The customs officers, in their smart clean, white shirts and blue trousers, were quite friendly, but most insistent in their search for subversive literature. Though we were able to show we were on a special political mission, that did not deter them from going through all our books and papers. A friend had given me a copy of Bacon's *Essays* to read on the journey, and I happened to have with me a new edition of the *Hunting of the Snark*, and I don't think my customs officer had heard of either. I felt very tempted to say to them the answer is a "Boojum," but I restrained myself for fear of trouble. But he was taking no risks and before he passed them he showed them to a colleague. In common fairness to these officials, on our return our own officials were equally meticulous. But I felt inclined to call his attention to the Statue of Liberty looming out of the mist. I know there is a complete answer to my criticism: there was a war on and the authorities were taking no risks and could not make exceptions.

I liked what I saw of the New York people. There is nothing

wrong with our Londoners, but they are much more reserved. Whenever I asked my way from anyone, whether well dressed or not, they were always anxious to have a chat. They generally noted my English accent and wanted to ask me all about the blitz and what London was looking like. The taxi-drivers I found particularly friendly.

George Penny (Marchwood) and I were driving in a taxi; there is no division between driver and passenger. George said to the driver, "That's a nice cigar you are smoking." "Guess it's the best I can buy," and pulling one out of his pocket said, "Have one?" and he meant it. When I was driving one evening with Wardlaw-Milne in Washington, we were not surprisingly talking politics. Suddenly, as we passed the White House, the driver cut in and said, "Frank lives there: I guess he's playing poker." I, innocently not grasping the implication, answered, "I didn't know that Roosevelt played cards." "Oh," he answered, "he's always at the game both day and night, but he's better at the foreign one than the home game, which he is making a mess of." On that particular drive the taxi suddenly stopped and in stepped a fashionably dressed lady. It seems there is a rule in Washington that if anyone hails a taxi and there is a vacant seat, the driver is entitled, if not bound, to make room. It was all above board and when we stopped at the Embassy, where we were staying, the driver deducted an amount from our fare as he was going to get paid by his additional passenger. The extra passenger did not take the slightest notice of us and behaved as if she was boarding a bus.

The immediate purpose of our visit was Ottawa, though we spent some days first at Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara inspecting war factories. Not unnaturally our Canadian hosts wanted to show us their war efforts, especially as, when a year previously a delegation had visited Great Britain, we had done the same to them. It was all very impressive, but I do think going from one munitions works to another is a bit wearisome and not very convincing, as you haven't the time to take much in, especially as invariably official lunches and the usual speeches were sandwiched in between the visits. But it is right to say that we received boundless hospitality and kindness from our Canadian friends. At Toronto I stole two days off from official visits to visit their state schools and secondly their famous university. I was much impressed by the school buildings which were well planned and designed, with excellent equipment. In most of them they follow the American system, and boys and girls are educated together. I know the case against this is that it results in hard-faced women and effeminate men, but no one can say that either the American

or Canadian soldiers are not tough. Some of our own co-educational schools have been supported by abnormal people or cranks.

That is inevitable with new experiments, but I do think with the immediate development foreshadowed in education, more consideration should be given to the American system.

I had a delightful day with the Principal of the university, a man of personality and character. The science side is world famous and many distinguished scientists are graduates of Toronto. The university is non-denominational, but they have associated denominational colleges, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and, most important of all, Roman Catholic.

Feeling in Ontario runs high between Catholic and Protestant, in fact in Toronto they celebrate the Battle of the Boyne, and it is something to get these denominations working together in the common cause of education.

When I travel I always endeavour to see something of the schools, not only because it is interesting to study comparative methods, but because it gives you an insight into the lives of the people if you see what they are doing for their young people and how they are shaping.

I had the privilege of speaking at a dinner given to the delegates at the Massey Hall, called after its donor, who is associated with the Massey Harris harvester, and who provided Canada with its High Commissioner to Great Britain. The hall is designed on the lines of an Oxford or Cambridge hall and is a great success æsthetically: attached to it is every kind of amenity for the students.

This was the only opportunity I had to speak during the tour, though I had to listen to countless speeches by my colleagues. I was the only Liberal Member of Parliament in the delegation, and there is a Liberal Government in Canada, and Canadian Liberal members made some comment on that omission. I made no complaint, but the responsibility was not mine.

At Ottawa we were joined by a delegation from Australia, and we already had representatives from New Zealand and Bermuda, and at every function we had to listen to speeches from every delegation; Bermuda counting equally with Great Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and at each lunch, dinner or meeting one of their two representatives claimed the right to speak.

The Australians were good fellows but how they could talk. Once any one of them got on his legs and started talking there was no stopping him. This was partly due to the fact that they never prepared their speeches. They spoke without notes and relied on their gift of the gab, which is considerable.

At Ottawa we spent several days in committee, discussing many problems much on the lines of previous conferences, and it would

not have been specially notable except that for the first time in the history of the Empire Parliamentary Association we were joined by a delegation from the American Congress—three senators and four members from the House of Representatives—who came as a result of a resolution passed by the Senate and concurred by the House of Representatives.

It was a distinguished delegation headed by Senator Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sol Bloom, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.

Connally, who represents Texas, is just what one would expect a Texas senator to look like. Tall, heavily built, with a heavy jaw and flowing hair, he wears a broad wide-awake hat and you almost expect to see a revolver in his hip pocket. He speaks in the grand manner and in the old-fashioned style of oratory.

Sol Bloom is a complete contrast, small, thick set, a typical representative of the East Side of New York. Bloom had been reluctant to come: he had not fancied the journey and was doubtful if it would serve a useful purpose. But it can be said he came to curse and remained to bless. Mackenzie King had arranged a dinner for the joint delegation the night they arrived, at a country club a few miles out of Ottawa. Bloom did not want to go and retired to bed. He had literally to be dragged to the dinner, but it did much to convert him to the conference.

Mackenzie King has the reputation of being a cold and uninspiring speaker, but whether it was because there was no Press present, or whether it was the circumstances of the dinner, on this occasion he was magnificent, and when he sat down we all spontaneously sprang to our feet and cheered. No other speeches had been arranged for, but many of the guests, including Connally and Bloom, stood up and testified. Bloom was particularly impressed. The success of the Canadian Prime Minister was largely due to his own personal history. He told us that his grandfather was a rebel against British rule and had found refuge in the U.S.A.: he explained to our visitors what so few Americans appreciate, that Canada had complete self-government and independence and how she had opted, and not been forced into the war. He told us how he had acted as go-between Great Britain and the U.S.A. to bring about better understanding.

Mackenzie King has none of the popular gifts generally associated with a great leader of men. He has the reputation of being shy and reserved and avoiding publicity, but in a country where party feeling runs high he has managed to retain his Liberal majority and his position of Prime Minister for more years than any previous Prime Minister.

He paid me the exceptional compliment as a fellow Liberal of inviting me to his private house where we lunched alone and quite informally. He took an intense interest in British affairs and wanted to know about his old friends in London, L. G. and Herbert Samuel, and I found him well-versed in Liberal literature. He had a particular admiration for Alfred Spender and his writings. He gave me a feeling of great sincerity of purpose and simplicity of character. When some of us left Ottawa for Washington, he paid us the exceptional compliment of coming to see us off at the station.

I attended some of the meetings of the Canadian House of Commons. They adhere to most of the British traditions: the Speaker marches in procession at each session as he does at Westminster; they start with questions to Ministers, and the shape of the chamber is the same. But there are many important differences: first, each member has his own allotted seat and desk, instead of being crowded together on long benches with only room on the floor for a proportion of them; secondly, they have taken over the American system of floor-boys who run about fetching and carrying for members. The night I was there it was very hot, and the boys were bringing members glasses of iced water.

But the proceedings are much less intimate than in our House, owing to the great size of the chamber. Each member having his own seat and desk, members are inclined not to take much notice of the debate, reading books and papers and even writing letters. I have had such a long experience of our House that I naturally prefer its atmosphere, but I recognise the Canadian House has some compensatory advantages. I had, also, the opportunity to compare both the British and Canadian Parliaments with Congress, because three of us, Stansgate, Wardlaw-Milne and myself, were invited over to Washington as their guests. We stayed with Halifax at the Embassy, a magnificent house designed by Lutyens on the outskirts of the city, with a fine garden at the back. I was much impressed with the design and dignity of the rooms, but I was told it was inconvenient to run and that everything had been sacrificed to appearance.

Halifax made a charming host. He has the grand manner coupled with obvious sincerity. He belongs to the rapidly disappearing school of aristocrats with a great sense of public duty to which Crewe and Sir Edward Grey belonged. I am told he did not at first make a favourable impression on the Americans, but they have learned both to like him and to trust him. There is a story told about him, which I don't vouch for, that when he was on a train journey one of his secretaries spoke to the engine driver and said that His Excellency the British Ambassador was at the back of the train, that he was a true democrat and that if he came

along to his carriage he would be pleased to shake hands with him. He received the prompt reply that he, too, was a true democrat and if the Ambassador cared to come along to his engine he would equally be ready to shake hands.

But I knew Halifax when, as Edward Wood, he was President of the Board of Education, and I have never known anyone so free from pomposity.

At the Capitol we were guests of the Foreign Affairs Committee and were taken to the Gallery of the House of Representatives and had a talk with Mr. Speaker Raeburn, as well as with the two floor leaders.

We were taken on the floor of the Senate and, in the middle of someone's speech, the proceedings were stopped for five minutes to enable members to shake hands with and speak to distinguished visitors, something quite unheard of at Westminster, and I cannot imagine it would ever be allowed there.

Among others I talked to was Senator Wheeler, the arch-Isolationist. I remarked to him that though I did not agree with his views, as a Liberal I admired his courage and independence, which seemed to please him.

What a lovely city Washington is. It is laid out in the grand manner and properly planned, everything radiating from the Capitol.

The Congressional Library is magnificent, a kind of combination between the British Museum Library and that of the House of Commons, and I was immensely impressed.

The Supreme Court building is a comparatively recent building. But the use of white marble which can survive the climate, but which in London would soon be begrimed with soot, does add to the beauty of the city. Their memorials make one blush with shame when one thinks of most of the poor stuff that disfigures our streets. Both the Lincoln and the Jefferson Memorials, placed as they are in perfect surroundings in the centre of a park, show what can be done when sculptors, architects and landscape gardeners combine.

During their visit to Ottawa and on our journey with them and during our stay at Washington, I became very friendly with congressmen. At first we did not seem to have many interests in common, but as we talked and exchanged anecdotes we gradually got to know one another and to find that our differences were largely superficial. Though British and American systems of government are different our problems are much the same. Incidentally, congressmen have many amenities provided for them that make British M.P.s green with envy. Each member is provided with a private room as well as a secretary and a stenographer.

We went out to America by sea, but I returned by Clipper, actually in the same plane Winston Churchill had travelled by on his last visit. We left Baltimore at midnight and arrived at Newfoundland about 10 a.m. I had never crossed the Atlantic by air before, and I found it a thrilling experience. It seems only the other day when a flight across the Atlantic was recorded as a great adventure, and here was I comfortably sitting in an armchair and leaving it to go to the smoking-room to have a nice hot breakfast served more comfortably than in a Pullman railway car.

We left Newfoundland after lunch and arrived in Ireland well before breakfast time. I can imagine nothing more lovely than flying through the heavens with creamy white clouds willowing beneath us and a clear sparkling blue sky above. Of course, we were lucky in our weather and the impression might have been very different had we run into a bad patch. Actually, as we approached the coast of Ireland the weather did deteriorate.

We landed at Foynes for an early breakfast, only to be told that the fog over the Irish Channel was too bad for us to proceed. We spent a pleasant twenty-four hours at Limerick. After New York it was very much like going back into the eighteenth century, with bare-footed children running about the back streets and everything very much as it must have been a century ago. A two-hours' journey the next day took us to Poole, where our seaplane glided down quietly and smoothly into the sheltered waters. There were the usual hold-ups and delays by the customs officials. They even contemplated examining my diary, in spite of the fact that I was returning from an official visit.

Thousands during the war years have visited America, and I have therefore not unduly dwelt upon my experiences there. But they made a deep impression on my mind.

Distance and time have now been overcome in our relations to the New World. When it took a week to reach America, and that meant crossing the Atlantic, generally rough, and the journey to Australia and New Zealand could not be done under a month, the New and the Old Worlds were definitely separate. But now any one of the Dominions can be reached in three days it is comparatively easy to keep contact and know each other.

I am convinced the English-speaking people must work and act together. It is not enough to treat the British Commonwealth as a world apart. We would have been sunk without lend-lease and the active help of the U.S.A. during both the great wars.

Besides, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are geographically closer to the U.S.A. than to Great Britain. They have much in common with her and admire the American way of living and accept their standards. That does not mean any diminution in their

love of the Mother Country; on the contrary, they have given ample evidence during three wars of their affection. But the vast majority of the people of the Dominions want close relationship and friendship with the Yanks, and they will go a long way to achieve it.

The U.S.A. has plenty of critics in this country. Some don't like the cut of American uniforms, others cannot bear their habit of chewing gum, others think their soldiers are too well paid, and anyhow they speak English in a strange way. That is the criticism of the man in the street. Many of us don't like their economic policy or their political institutions and their treatment of their coloured population. Equally, the Americans think us quite out of date, are puzzled by the monarchy and the House of Lords, and our strange currency.

But I know when I am in the United States I feel at home and not a foreigner. And I think most Americans feel the same about Great Britain.

I write at length on this subject because just as the U.S.A. has its isolationists, so have we our own school of thought, very noisy but not, I believe, numerous, who would isolate ourselves from America.

I am convinced the only hope of civilisation is close collaboration between all the English-speaking peoples with their common love of justice and fair play, as well as their determination to eliminate war as a method of settling disputes between nations.

We are always hearing a lot about the isolationists in the U.S.A., but when I was in America I discovered there were a number of people who were thinking in the other direction, and that they were growing both in numbers and influence. There are many hard-headed business men and industrialists who had become conscious that America cannot isolate her economy. The appalling slump of 1932 had taught them a lesson, and the events of the war had strengthened their case for a wider trade outlet. Economists in America have been preaching for some years the inter-relation of nations and the need for world trade if industry is to have any pretence to stability. Of course, the combines and trusts that have grown powerful behind tariff walls will resist changes in a system that has protected them so much.

Cordell Hull, when Secretary of State, advocated consistently the freeing of American trade. As long ago as 3rd February, 1943, when I opened the second day's debate on economic policy, I quoted a speech by him, made in May 1940, long before the United States had entered the war, when he pointed out that, "The far-reaching objectives of the Atlantic Charter cannot be obtained by wishful thinking." He then went on to say, "We, in this country, must realise that their achievement will be impossible if

we follow a policy of narrow economic nationalism, such as our extreme and disastrous tariff policy after the last war. We must realise that our own prosperity depends fully as much on prosperous conditions in other countries as their prosperity depends on us. We must show now by our positive acts of collaboration with other nations of like mind that we are prepared to shoulder our full share of responsibility for building a better world."

In commenting on this quotation, I said, "That was a gesture which should have received an immediate response from this country; I know that the Chancellor's heart is all right but it is unfortunate that he does not give a more definite response to such a generous gesture from Cordell Hull, which obviously represents the mind of the Executive in Washington."

When I was in Washington in the summer of 1943, I heard more than one complaint against the poor response this liberal attitude was receiving in my country.

When, therefore, a debate was opened on 20th April, 1944, on Commonwealth unity, especially in relation to trade, I went out of my way to advocate co-operation with the U.S.A. This was most necessary, because speaker after speaker, including Shinwell, preached the Ottawa policy to which so much exception had been taken in America by our well-wishers, even more than our enemies. I reminded the House that on 23rd February, 1942, we signed an agreement with the United States arising out of the policy of lend-lease, clause 7 of which says, "In the final determination of the benefits to be provided to the U.S.A. by the Government of the United Kingdom in return for aid furnished under Lend-Lease Act, the terms and conditions should be such as not to burden commerce between the two countries, but to promote mutually advantageous economic relations between them to the betterment of world-wide economic relations. . . ." But these are the important words, "the elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers; and in general, to the attainment of all the economic objectives set out in the Atlantic Charter."

I went on to point out, "That agreement was signed over two years ago at the time of our direst peril when we were militarily weak, short of arms and short of materials. Our only hope was generous treatment by the United States. As a result of the leadership of Mr. Roosevelt, the remarkably generous policy of lend-lease was initiated. In this agreement not very much was asked in return, and it would be most unfortunate at a time like this, when our armies, our airmen and our navies are fighting side by side, if it were thought on the other side of the Atlantic that we

wished to find fault with or be critical of an agreement of that kind. . . ."

Later on I said in my speech, "We should not take the line 'This is our policy; we demand imperial preference, we insist on bulk purchase. We want this or that policy and we are going to have it willy-nilly.' We should discuss round the table how we can adjust our economic policy to work in with that of the U.S.A."

I received little or no support for my speech in the House, in fact it was rather resented. How right I was events were to prove. The Government was completely taken by surprise when at the end of the Japanese war lend-lease was brought to an end, but in the light of the cavalier way article 7 had been treated by us, I do not think we had any real ground for complaint.

I have dwelt on this issue because I do think it is vital we shall now take the right turning. If we listen to some of the counsels we are receiving, I am satisfied we shall be embroiled in wrangles with the U.S.A. to our lasting detriment.

Each year during the war Parliament had to seek powers to renew its life, and on every occasion I had pleaded for the setting up of a Speaker's Conference on the lines of the one constituted during 1917 during the last war. I had not received much encouragement from the Government; but at last they yielded, and early in 1944 provision was made to set up one under Mr. Speaker. A two-days' debate took place welcoming the proposal. It was common knowledge that a number of members on all sides favoured the conference giving full consideration to our electoral machinery, but Liberal members were particularly anxious that the scope of the inquiry should be as wide as possible. On the other hand the official attitude of the Conservative and Labour Parties was opposed to any change in the system of elections.

Arthur Greenwood, who opened the debate on the second day, went out of his way to plead in favour of the two-party system. "We have," he said, "now arrived at the time when the people outside the two predominant parties should make up their minds under which umbrella they will come." I followed Greenwood and pointed out, "that there was a time when the Labour Party was the third party. In the gamble of politics, partly by cross voting and partly from other causes, they have now become the second party, but there is no guarantee that either the Conservative or the Labour Party may not some day be the third party. Is it to be suggested that because they are the third party they are to be completely snuffed out by the electoral system, not because the electors do not want to see them in Parliament, but by the weakness or faults of the machinery of elections. That is a travesty of democracy." I proceeded to point out that new parties are

coming up, such as the Communists and Common Wealth, and they were entitled to claim representation. But I cannot resist here making another quotation from this speech of mine. "I do not like to make prophecies," I said, "especially in the House of Commons where they are recorded, but I suggest that in the next five or six years the Conservative Party may have a very rude awakening. They had a very rude awakening in 1906, and I am convinced that in the next few years they will have a severe struggle for existence and may—it is more than likely—in the gamble of politics, find themselves the third party, and much regretting their opposition to any change in the electoral system." I was a few years out in my date in prophecy, and the Conservatives are still the second party, but as the result of the serious setback they suffered in 1945, many of their leaders, I am assured, are reconsidering their attitude to reform in the electoral system.

But to my mind the most serious weakness in the system of election is that it so often results in depriving Parliament of the ablest public men. In 1931 all the Labour leaders, except Attlee and Lansbury, lost their seats, and were out of the House of Commons for over four years. Arthur Greenwood did get in at a by-election, but Herbert Morrison, Alexander, Shinwell and a number of others, some of whom never got back again, were out for the whole period. This time the same fate has overtaken many of the ablest Tory Ministers. No doubt some are getting back by the artificial creation of by-elections, and others are finding consolation in the House of Lords, but any careful observer of Parliament will agree our present system, depending so much on the throw of the dice, keeps out of the House of Commons many who ought to be there.

There is nothing sacrosanct in our electoral system. On the contrary, as I pointed out, when we were legislating for other countries we don't apply it. I cannot put it better than I did in the debate. "We are a peculiar Parliament in many ways: we are sometimes charged with being hypocrites. When we are dealing with another country, whether it be India or Ireland, we do not say that this single constituency basis is the right one, but insist, as a condition of self-government, that they should have proportional representation. They had it in Northern Ireland for five years and dropped it, but the Rt. Hon. Member for Antrim (Sir H. O'Neill) yesterday showed that it was quite easy to work and that there were few spoilt ballot papers. In Southern Ireland it has been in operation for twenty years and there has not been a multiplication of parties. On the contrary, there are fewer parties in Southern Ireland than there are here. We must not forget there are eight parties in this House. They are of varying size,

but they are there. In Southern Ireland, with P.R., there has been only a reasonable number. While the system has given representation to the minorities, you have greater stability there than in any other part of the British Commonwealth. They have had only two governments in the last twenty years, the governments of Mr. Cosgrave and Mr. De Valera. I do not ask the Speaker's Conference to favour any one particular system but to examine all proposals without prejudice."

The Speaker's Conference was duly constituted and reported. But I don't think it is an unfair thing to say that the majority made up their minds before the opening of the inquiry there was to be no change in the method of voting. They made some minor recommendation but no substantial alterations. I do think a golden opportunity was missed. During the previous war, drastic recommendations were made by the then Speaker's Conference, including no less a change than the extension of the franchise to women. They even recommended that in a hundred areas there should be an experiment in proportional representation.

In the Representation of the People Act, 1918, section 20, subsection (2a), provision was actually made for its application and for the appointment of commissioners to select the hundred most suitable seats. Clause 41 of that Act defines and explains the system of the single transferable vote. The commissioners were duly appointed and selected a number of towns after careful examination and inquiry. It is this list of towns which was turned down by Parliament, stultifying the Act. But the principle is embodied in an Act of Parliament.

I have never been one who has been a violent advocate of proportional representation. But I have always felt that Parliament should be as nearly representative of the people as possible, and if the method of election is satisfactory, it should secure reasonable representation of minorities. There is a dispute going on as to whether the Russian system is democracy. They devoutly believe it is. We stoutly reply that according to our standards it is not, as it only provides for one party, for an official list and minorities are barred. Our boast is that we have free elections and any party, however unorthodox, has the right to put up candidates, and that minorities, however unpopular their opinions, are entitled to representation. Under our method of election in practice in many municipalities, candidates have no chance to get elected except they belong to one particular party, though there are large blocks of voters who would like to be represented by another party.

In London, in places like Bethnal Green and Bermondsey and Poplar, on the borough councils all the members belong to the Labour Party; there is no opposition and proper criticism on their

councils. On the other hand, all the members of the Chelsea Council belong to the Conservative Party and there is no representative of Labour.

In the Parliament of 1931 the Opposition was reduced to a mere handful of members, and though the Liberal and Labour members who were elected did put up a good fight, the government of the day would do more or less as it liked.

But there is another and perhaps stronger reason for reconsideration of the method of election. In the time of the restricted franchise, men with political abilities did find reasonable security in public life. If they proved themselves gifted in the art of government they could hope to find in Parliament a chance for a career. But with the mass electorate, personality and character, under our present system of election, do not seem to count. Government is a highly skilled job and we do want to attract to it the best brains and abilities. I hope the last word has not been said on the subject.

The setting up of the Speaker's Conference was an indication that both the Government and Parliament were conscious that an election could not be indefinitely delayed. In 1944 the House of Commons was nine years old: it had only been elected for five years. The various party organisations, up to that time more or less quiescent owing to the war, began to examine their organisations.

Though I was Chief Whip, up to 1941 I had little or nothing to do with the party organisations outside the House. When I took over my duties in 1935, Archie Sinclair asked me to hand over the work of the Liberal Central Organisation to Harcourt Johnstone, who had lost his seat in the House and who had been in charge of it before. Though I was chairman *ex-officio*, it would have been ungracious to refuse, and I readily accepted the proposal. Harcourt Johnstone was a man who kept things in his own hands. I was busy with my work in Parliament: I had no responsibility, therefore, for the running of the office. When Harcourt Johnstone was appointed Minister for Overseas Trade, I did offer to take over the administration of the Liberal Central as I did not see how he could combine a ministerial with a party position. However, Archie did not view the change with favour and Harcourt Johnstone remained in charge for another six months. At the end of 1940 Harcourt Johnstone threw in his hand and asked me to take over the association.

Before I write more about this new work I undertook, I should explain the organisation of the party.

To the public there is always something mysterious about the party machine. There is much talk about the caucus and the wicked machinations of party headquarters. But my experience,

such as it is, is that parties are run very much like other organisations or businesses.

In the Liberal Party the administration is divided into two. First, there is the Liberal Party Organisation, which is a thoroughly democratic affair on which every constituency association is represented. At the annual assembly, members elect an executive, which is responsible for the organisation of the party in the country. It works through areas, such as London, the Home Counties, Devon and Cornwall, the Eastern Counties and so on. The L.P.O., as it is called, raises money for its work first by fees from its affiliated associations, and secondly by appeals to the public and well-known Liberals. Its accounts are published and its revenue is little enough for its purpose.

But alongside the L.P.O. is the Liberal Central Association, which is the organisation of the Leader, the Chief Whip and Parliamentary Party. It does the work for the party in the House of Commons, and is responsible for candidates.

When I took over the Central Association I found an overdraft at the bank and less than seventy candidates fixed. This position came as a complete surprise to me, as I had been led to believe the position was all right. What had happened was that many of the large subscribers on which the Central Association had hitherto depended had drifted away from the party while, what with the war and high taxation, other sources had dried up. What with my other duties I was let in for no easy task. I was fortunate to find a friend to come to my help in Sir John Stewart-Wallace, who had been most of his life head of the Land Registry. He had reached retiring age, his department had been evacuated to Bournemouth and its work reduced to a minimum. He had always been a keen Liberal but was precluded by his position from taking an active part in politics. He, therefore, handed in his resignation and came and joined me at headquarters. I cannot say what a comfort he was to me: I don't think I could have carried on without him. He is an Irishman from Northern Ireland, but he has the charm and blarney of the Southerner, and a genius for making friends. I managed to get Major-General Grey to act as treasurer, and he, with the help of Lord Sherwood, put the finances in order.

Our main job was to find candidates, almost impossible at first with the war on. Every fit Liberal was either in one of the Services or on a war job. Local associations had suspended political work and propaganda, to concentrate on helping the war. Many of the agents also had transferred to other work. It may be argued that that would apply equally to the other two principal parties, but the conditions with them were different. The Conservatives had the

immense advantage of having 367 members in the House against 18 Liberal members. It is true all of them were not seeking re-election, but it is far easier to find someone ready to stand for a seat when it is already held by his own party. Besides, the sitting member has three advantages over another candidate: first, he gets a salary, part of which he can afford to hand over to his local association; secondly, he gets a free railway pass to and from his constituency; thirdly, he has the right of access to Government departments, which enables him to ventilate the grievances of his constituents. Besides, Conservatives receive considerable financial support from vested interests, from the landlords, the brewers and big business. It is always easier for them to raise funds locally than for Liberals, who can make no special appeal of this kind.

As for the Labour Party, it has at its back the powerful organisation of the trade unions, which in war time far from suspending their activities are able to add largely to their membership and number. In most industries no one can work now except if he joins his appropriate trade union. Most of the large factories have their works committees with a full-time secretary. It is common knowledge, in many cases, that after insisting a man or woman must join the union the local secretary often used his position to bring pressure on them to join the Labour Party. While the other two parties felt restrained to suspend political propaganda during the war, in the works this peaceful penetration was all the time going on.

Up to 1944 it was almost impossible to persuade Liberals to take any active interest in party politics or even to consider adopting candidates. It was not until early 1945 there was any real awakening of activity among the Liberals in the constituencies, and the same applied to possible candidates. It was almost considered indecent while the war was at its height to talk party politics.

When prospects of the war improved a complete change came over the Liberals in the country. With the hope of the war ending and victory assured, candidates came to us in a spate. We could hardly keep pace with their offers of services. If we had been able to put the organisation in order as rapidly as candidates came forward we could have easily placed another hundred. Funds, of course, were a real difficulty. But most of the men and women who offered their services were ready to find money and were of an excellent quality.

As it was, to have put 305 candidates in the field was a great achievement. Some of them, though they had no previous experience, tackled completely derelict constituencies and improvised their own organisations. I have got to know many of these young men and women since the election, and I am immensely impressed both by their ability and character. It has been suggested that

one reason why the election was rushed was that Conservative headquarters had been warned of the Liberal revival. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of that suggestion, but if our candidates had had more time they would have given a far better account of themselves, while if headquarters had had another couple of months they would have been able to put many more in the field. There were many portents of a Liberal revival in the country. The results did not justify those signs. We were almost swept out of existence. One explanation is that we had not a full complement of candidates, the electors felt it would be a waste of effort to back Liberals. But my own view is that the quiet patient underground work during the five years of war by the Labour Party decided the public to give the Socialists a chance, while the self-denying ordinance of the Liberals during the war put them out of the running, the electors being hardly conscious of their existence. I have heard very few complaints from Liberal candidates and they have taken the set-back with remarkable equanimity.

In August 1941, Hugh Seely vacated his seat as Liberal member for Berwick-on-Tweed on becoming Under Secretary of State for Air and accepting a peerage. This provided a great opportunity for a Liberal to enter Parliament, especially as under the party truce he was not likely to have a contest. There were many names submitted to the local association, including a number of experienced politicians, but in the end they selected a young captain of the Guards, George Grey, age twenty-three. At a recent meeting of the Assembly he had made a deep impression on all who had heard him by a thoughtful and obviously sincere speech. No doubt local Liberals were influenced in their choice by the fact that he was a kinsman of Sir Edward Grey, who for long had both represented and lived in the division; but he had a good army record and had fought at Dunkirk. I had the great satisfaction of introducing him into the House when he took his seat for Berwick-on-Tweed.

He did not have many opportunities to take part in the debates of the House as he continued on active service, but on the few occasions that he spoke he shaped remarkably well, both in the matter and style of his speeches. He reminded me in appearance, and in his quiet way of speaking, of Edward Grey, though he was only a distant cousin. He had a considerable influence on his contemporaries and many a young man in his regiment came under his spell. He took his politics seriously, but unlike so many men of his generation, he was extremely well-balanced in his ideas. In fact, he had all the attributes of a statesman. I liked him enormously, as did everyone of all parties in the House who came in contact with him. He had a keen sense of humour and in spite

of his early success he did not take himself too seriously. Under a ruling of the Prime Minister he could easily have opted himself out of the Army: he had already seen active service and his help was badly wanted by the small party to which he belonged. But he argued if he was to have a real influence on his contemporaries he must remain in the fighting line and not take advantage of his position as an M.P. He crossed over to Normandy on D-Day in charge of a tank unit, and was killed by a sniper.

His death came as a great shock to me, but it was also a serious loss to the party, and I believe the nation has lost in him a real leader of men. It was not going to be easy for us to find someone adequately to fill his place.

I had heard from several of his friends that Beveridge was seriously thinking of standing for Parliament. I know he had already been approached by the Labour Party, but my information was that he was contemplating standing as an Independent. Some of my Liberal friends had already sounded him, and I knew he was not unsympathetic to my party. I consulted Archie Sinclair and the leaders of the party and they agreed that, provided I was satisfied that he was a Liberal and accepted our policy, I should certainly submit his name with others for the consideration of the Liberals at Berwick-on-Tweed. Beveridge was an old friend of mine. During his inquiry into unemployment he had met and discussed the problem with my Liberal Post-War Committee and we had entertained him after the publication of his report on social insurance. I rang him up on the phone and he promptly asked me to spend the week-end at University College, Oxford, of which he was Master. I had a delightful two days with him; on the first evening Dingle Foot was with us, but on the second day I had him more or less alone, although his wife, who belongs to a good old Liberal family, occasionally joined us. We had a heart-to-heart talk: I had to satisfy myself he was a Liberal; he naturally wanted to be sure that our policy was broad enough to take in his full employment policy. I know Will has his critics. What man of genius has not? He is a bit arrogant and he suffers fools badly. But he is a good companion, has a keen sense of humour and is a lovable man. Anyhow, I know I like him, even though I don't always agree with him. I satisfied myself he was a good Liberal and a great acquisition to the party.

I sent his name down to Berwick and he was adopted with enthusiasm, and after a hot contest was duly elected.

Once in the House he threw himself with characteristic energy into the work of the party, making speeches, organising, and writing pamphlets. Under any sound system of election he would have been re-elected. But in many of the remote villages

in his constituency they were more interested in the parish pump than in world affairs. And this man, with his forty years of public service behind him, with his wide knowledge of so many problems, is out of Parliament, while an almost unknown local man sits in his place. I don't think any more comment is necessary, except that in the short time he was in the House he showed real parliamentary gifts.

I have not written anything of the great events of 1944 and 1945. It is not because I am unconscious of their importance but because they are so near at hand that they are familiar to all of us.

One thing I should like to record here, and that is that though I was kept informed officially of most events of importance I was in complete ignorance of the events that led up to D-Day, and no one was more taken by surprise than I was by the skill and secrecy with which the landing on the coast of Normandy was organised. Sufficient credit has not been given to the Prime Minister and all his chiefs of staff who worked out with their opposite numbers in the U.S.A. the master plan. Churchill exercised great restraint for a long time in face of constant attacks by left-wing politicians because of his failure to organise a second front.

It is already forgotten that meetings were organised for a year or two before the landing, protesting against this failure; the hoardings were covered with posters, "Second Front Now." We know that if under this pressure the Prime Minister had been rushed it would have spelt disaster, as it was vital to success that the plan should be worked out in every detail and proper equipment for landing constructed. It wanted months of careful preparation if countless lives were not to be lost and success assured. Members of Parliament were pestered by long-haired youths, safe in protected occupations, to force the Government in 1942 and 1943 to land a force in France. It would not have helped Russia, because if the expeditionary force had been landed prematurely it would have failed in its objective, which would have been disastrous for our morale and would have reacted adversely on our ally.

In peace time it is customary for the Prime Minister on the eve of the opening of Parliament to give an official dinner at 10 Downing Street to all his Ministers, when the contents of the King's Speech are revealed to them. This custom had been suspended during the war, but Churchill had decided to revive it in 1944. The only outsiders invited are Mr. Speaker and the mover and seconder of the Address. But on this occasion the Prime Minister, as he was head of a non-party government, decided to extend his invitation to Arthur Greenwood and myself, a charming gesture which I much appreciated. At the last moment Greenwood

was prevented from coming by a cold, and I was, therefore, the only unofficial guest present. I sat directly opposite the Prime Minister, at the high table with James Stuart the Government Whip and Whitley the Labour Chief Whip, and had an opportunity of a talk with him. It is not customary to have speeches on this occasion but as it happened to be the Prime Minister's birthday, Clem Attlee in an informal speech proposed his health. Winston, while protesting against this breach with tradition, made an impromptu speech in which he mentioned half a dozen of us by name, and he was good enough to say some kind things about me, I think, maybe, because I was sitting dead opposite him, but it was very flattering to my conceit to be singled out for mention in such a goodly company. But Winston has always been capable of generous gestures, and that was characteristic of him. We are now in opposite camps for different causes, but that does not lessen my admiration of the great work he did in the war.

When VE-Day came there was plenty of warning that surrender was coming, but there was considerable delay in its official announcement.

On 8th May, 1945, the House of Commons met as usual and opened with prayers followed by questions, which were deliberately protracted to give the Prime Minister time to reach the House and make his momentous statement. We knew the Armistice had been signed, but when Winston Churchill stood at the box and repeated the statement he had just broadcast to the nation, that the previous morning at General Eisenhower's headquarters the designated head of the German State had signed the act of unconditional surrender, not one of us present could but feel deep emotion. No one was more moved than Winston himself. Quite informally he crossed the floor of the House and shook hands with some of us senior members. Then we filed out of the House in procession across Parliament Square, through cheering crowds, headed by Mr. Speaker, preceded by the Serjeant-at-Arms bearing the mace, to the church of St. Margaret, Westminster, where the Speaker's Chaplain (Rev. Canon Don) moved us to thanksgiving:

"Brethren, it is with full hearts that we gather here to-day and give thanks for our deliverance from the hands of our enemies. As it is meet and right, we lift up our hearts in thanksgiving to God saying, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we rejoice.'"

It was a happy but sober crowd that rejoiced that day. They enjoyed themselves but there were none of those excesses that marred Armistice Day in 1918. The people had suffered so much and been through so many ordeals that they took peace quietly.

I went down to Bethnal Green and walked through many of the

side streets and talked to the people. Many of the old familiar streets had completely disappeared, others had suffered severe damage. Fathers, brothers and sons were overseas or were dead or missing. At night there were bonfires and the burning of effigies, but these were for the children, and it is true to say London took victory calmly.

I think it was unfortunate we could not have kept the party truce a little longer. We had suffered so much together we might have kept our differences in cold storage a little longer. I don't intend here to apportion blame. But I don't believe on this occasion Winston Churchill chose his counsellors well. Many of his friends advised him to cash in while the going was good and the halo of victory was on his head. I am convinced he acted against his better judgment, as he had repeatedly expressed his desire to avoid a Khaki Election or to repeat the mistakes of 1918. The temptation was great and he fell to it. Whether the result might have been different if he had acted otherwise I doubt, but certainly many people deeply resented being rushed into party politics before they had time to recover from the strain of nearly six long years of war. He tried to put the blame on the Labour Party but he was not convincing. The date for the dissolution was the Prime Minister's responsibility, and he cannot escape that fact.

But just as in 1918 victory deprived me of my seat in Parliament, so in 1945 it brought about the same result.

I make no complaint: I had had a good innings, no one can expect to represent a constituency indefinitely, and I had not far short of forty years' association with Bethnal Green, twenty-eight as member for the L.C.C. and twenty-three as its representative in the House of Commons. In 1945 I was well received wherever I went in Bethnal Green, and there were few signs of opposition. But there were many changes in the district since the election of 1935: most of the younger men were overseas, many of the streets had been destroyed by the blitz, and many homes were damaged. Many of my best supporters were off the register, partly because of the inefficiency of its composition, partly because many women were evacuated at the date it was compiled, but there were many newcomers, especially wives of Servicemen, who were new to the division. All these factors combined against me. But there was a great Labour wave sweeping across the country and it swept me away with it. I cannot see any immediate prospect of my return to Parliament, though I don't feel my career is finished and I cannot but feel my accumulated experience may be of some use to the nation.

Has it all been worth while? I think emphatically yes!

It is difficult for me to point to any positive achievement. I would have liked to have had more opportunity to prove myself in an executive position as a head of a department or in an administrative capacity. But that was not to be.

Most of my time I had been in opposition and belonged to a minority party. That was not my fault but due to my opinions not being fashionable. I could have followed the example of others and changed my coat and been on the popular side. I have had many inducements. Both Lansbury and Lees-Smith approached me on more than one occasion to join the Labour Party, and there is reason to believe that if I had done so I should have achieved high office. One prominent Labour man, whose name wild horses will not drag from me, offered to see that I should not have a Labour opponent against me in the field if I gave an undertaking to "cross the floor" at the appropriate time. He pointed out that at that time our stock was low. I replied that I was not a rat to leave a sinking ship. Besides, I explained, I was not in favour of the ownership of "All the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange by the State." The answer I received was that that was not practical politics but only an ultimate ideal. But I pointed out that as a convert I should be expected to mouth these phrases, and I was not, even for a safe seat, prepared to sell my soul.

The fact is I am an unrepentant Liberal. I am convinced half the troubles in the world are caused by the decline of Liberalism.

This country is the home of Liberalism: it certainly, at heart, is not Socialist, even though it may vote Labour.

The other day I congratulated a distinguished Labour Minister on the excellent speeches he was making, and said they might easily have been made by a Liberal. Promptly he replied, "But this country is Liberal."

Socialism is a foreign import. Many continental people like to be regulated, ordered and directed: they don't mind handing themselves over to the State. That is why conscription was acceptable to most nations in Europe, but it was always unpopular here.

The British people do value liberty: they want to be allowed to manage their own lives, and don't want to be told by officials what to do with them. Under the pressure of war they are prepared to barter away their freedom to save the country from invasion.

Liberals are always accused of being guilty of *laissez-faire*. But if the history of the last half-century is examined, Liberals have been responsible for more social legislation than everyone else put together. They are all for using the machinery of the State for the common good provided it is not done at the expense

of the essential liberties. We must think in terms of the individual and not in terms of the crowd. Life is an adventure, and if all risks are removed from it it loses its savour.

The State can be a useful servant, but makes a bad master.

All progress is made by individual human effort. Socialism, if carried to its logical conclusion, must sap the spirit of adventure and that individual initiative that has created the British Commonwealth of Nations and developed the field of science and invention.

I have seen Liberalism fall on evil days. Total war is the antithesis to it, and is destructive of everything it stands for.

The 1914 war produced Communism, Fascism and the Totalitarian State.

The stronger the State becomes, the greater the need for Liberalism in its truest and broadest sense.

But this is a history of forty years of political life and not a disquisition on political principles.

I have tried to give a correct record of my activities during that period and an account of the persons and problems I have contacted. I have not hesitated to write frankly about public figures I have met. I hope I have hurt no one's feelings. But if men and women seek publicity they must not object to criticism. I think the readers of this book will agree that, though I have exposed man's little foibles, I have not been ungenerous, and have been equally ready to discover those good qualities that I am satisfied are dominant in public men.

I have had many disappointments and set-backs during those forty years, but on the whole I look back upon them with pleasure. I have had much greater satisfaction out of my life, with all its uncertainties, than I would have had had I been content to go backwards and forwards to an office in security and comfort. I hope some of my readers will be encouraged by my experiences to enter public life and give themselves to the service of the nation.

CHAPTER XI

POSTSCRIPT

WHEN I wrote this book I looked on it as an obituary notice, or at any rate, as hail and farewell. And it did look as the end of forty years of active political life. As I indicated in my introduction, I had visions of peace and quiet and changed pursuits. I have always taken great interest in music, drama and the arts but had little time to go to concerts, theatres or picture galleries. Then

I have a small garden at the back of my house in which I am intensely interested, and I like to dig and weed in it and watch the results of my labours and count every flower that appears. Though it is at Chiswick, I grow apples and even strawberries and raspberries, though I admit most of the fruit goes to the feeding of birds. Like most gardeners, I am torn between desire for the fruit and love of the birds. But I must admit that my body will not stand the strain of prolonged digging and I get appalling backache. I spent the first few months of my enforced leisure in writing this book and then I found myself at a loose end with time on my hands.

My wife is an artist and a good one. She takes her art seriously, in fact works at her painting seven days a week and generally twelve hours out of the twenty-four. She has had an immense output of pictures and has painted attractive landscapes and some portraits under the signature of Freida Harris. When, however, critics discover she is my wife she is immediately written down as an amateur and accordingly disparaged, of which there is evidence in an incident that occurred at a show she had at a Chelsea gallery. She was exhibiting a number of serious pictures but she included a few that she had painted for a lark and signed them J. Chuckney. One critic, after being very condescending about Freida Harris's pictures, said he much preferred those by her young friend, Chuckney!

Of recent years she has been interested mainly in abstract painting. Besides, she has produced some sixty designs for the Taro Cards which were shown at the Royal Water Colour Societies' Gallery, and they have been published in a book on the history of these cards.

This perhaps appears irrelevant to my postscript, but the fact that my wife was busy with her painting made it difficult for me to enjoy idleness.

My wife has never been a political woman. I have seen so many public men followed about by their spouses who act as their shadows, sing their praises and push their claims to advancement. To me it has always been a relief that I can find recreation in talking with her on subjects outside political life. But she has been splendid at election time, when she has generally worked herself to the bone.

She believes in my political star and she could not bear to see it dimmed. Anyhow, I was urged by her to get back into the political arena.

After my defeat at the General Election of 1945 one or two of my supporters urged that I should stand at the next L.C.C. election. I dismissed the suggestion, first, because I did not see much prospect of election in the light of my heavy defeat in July, and secondly,

I did not fancy the idea of returning to work that I had left twelve years ago.

But my wife took another view. She particularly admired my work for education and pressed on me that I ought to carry on the tradition of my old colleague, the Rev. Stewart Headlam. Pressure came from unexpected quarters. More than one educationist of note told me that there was great work waiting for me at County Hall if I could get elected there.

Then I received a petition, signed by Bethnal Green electors, begging me to be their candidate. I still hesitated. There was little prospect of other Liberal candidates standing in London for the L.C.C., while both Labour and Conservatives were contesting most constituencies.

There are two divisions of Bethnal Green, and it did not seem sense to contest the South-West Division if the North-East was not fought.

The date of the election was 7th March, 1946. About Christmas I decided to accept the invitation on two conditions, first, that I could find a suitable candidate to stand with me, and secondly, that two good candidates were found for the neighbouring constituency.

Both were fulfilled. During the General Election I was brought in contact with a Captain Edward Martell, one of the few purposeful men that the party has recently thrown up. He was obviously a born organiser and, what is more, he was a convinced Liberal, not too common a combination these days. After the debacle of July 1945, the Liberal candidates got together and reformed their association, electing me as president and Martell as honorary secretary. I asked him if he would stand with me for the L.C.C., and he characteristically replied, "Yes, if you will, I will." That clinched it as far as he was concerned. There was still two suitable men required to fight North-East Bethnal Green. Many years ago a Mr. Roberts had fought Horatio Bottomley when he was at the height of his power in South Hackney, and no one would stand up to him. He was then an assistant teacher in a Bethnal Green school and afterwards became head of a North London Literary Institute. He had retired and I heard he was thirsting for a fight with Labour. I approached him and he promptly accepted an invitation to contest North-East Bethnal Green for the L.C.C. I found a good colleague to stand with him, a Mr. John Ellis, who was Liberal candidate at Dulwich at the last parliamentary election, and who is interested in public health.

And so our team was fixed up and, as it turned out, they gave a very good account of themselves.

I need not record the details of the fight: they conformed in

most ways to other election contests. Here I was on my seventieth birthday in my twenty-first election, if both L.C.C. and parliamentary contests are lumped together. You might well say I was old enough to know better, or that there is no fool like an old fool. Only a few months ago I had been beaten by the decisive majority of over 2,000. Anyhow, a faint heart never won fair lady: I was wooing Bethnal Green with the confidence that belief in a cause only can give. But it was February this time instead of summer, and a particularly wild one at that. Those streets to say the least of it were draughty. Out canvassing I was more than once caught in a blizzard. But the coldness of the weather was more than made up by the warmth of my reception. I was greeted everywhere as an old friend and I was assured that they were going to make no mistake about it this time. And I was lucky in my stable companion. Martell proved a terrific worker, bubbling over with ideas and not sparing himself in any way. I felt I had someone ready and able to carry on the Bethnal Green tradition. However, I was not overconfident of the result. The Labour machine is both powerful and efficient. They are able to bring to bear on the voter all the influence of the trade unions: the loyalty of the working man to his union transcends almost everything else. Liberals were only putting up a half-dozen candidates in the whole of London. I was fighting a lone hand against the whole strength of the Labour Party: none of my colleagues had had any previous L.C.C. experience. However, when the votes came to be counted it was found that the minority of 2,000 of the recent Parliamentary Election had been converted into a majority for me of over 1,000, and I once more represented Bethnal Green on the L.C.C., this time with my new friend, Edward Martell.

The result took London completely by surprise. Labour gained many seats from the Tories and the only two other seats they lost were to the Communists. London swung once more to the Left. But my little victory was not a gain for the Right: apart from any personal hold I had on the division, we fought on a Radical and Progressive policy. All my supporters were working men and women and most of the men ardent trade unionists. But I did find a number only too glad to throw over the growing power of the Labour caucus that for some time has become too conscious of its strength and inclined to presume upon it too much. But the fact that the electors had known me for forty years did play some little part in the result, and there is no gainsaying it.

With my election my difficulties were by no means over. Many of my old colleagues, both Labour and Tory, gave me a most friendly welcome back to the L.C.C., and the Council officials received me in the kindest way. But the official attitude of the

Labour Party was definitely hostile. How dare I come back like a ghost from the past: the Liberal Party was dead and I had no right to resurrect it. I was coldly informed that my party was no longer recognised, that I could claim no seat on committees, either for myself or my colleague, and that if I was to have a place on committees I must look to the official opposition. Of course, such an attitude offends the whole principle of the Local Government Act under which the L.C.C. functions. That Act recognises no party, each elected member has equal responsibility before the law. I was informed that I must belong to the majority side or the minority side and that the majority could not recognise any splinter parties, a doctrine going very close to some of the totalitarian theories so fashionable these days. However, I was not going to accept this doctrine lying down, and I made a vigorous protest at the first meeting of the Council.

In the House of Commons I was accustomed to every courtesy, from the Prime Minister downwards. I see no reason that any member, however unimportant or however small his following, should be made to feel he was not wanted.

Once a member is elected to a representative body, the essence of democracy is that he is entitled to all the privileges and rights of the institution to which he is accredited. I have reason to believe that some members of the Labour Party by no means approved of this attempt to boycott myself and my colleague.

Anyhow, it has been singularly unsuccessful. It has just put me on my mettle. I have already been involved in at least one scene, which is certainly not to my liking. But I have gone to the County Council to do a job of work, to lend a hand in the replanning and rebuilding of war-scarred London, and above all, to play a part in moulding a new system of education which the Act of 1944 provides for but which will require all the skill and goodwill of all parties if it is to be translated into action. I do not want to be dragged into bitter party controversy. I am ready to act with all men and women of goodwill to make our great city a better place to live in for those fine people who so bravely stood up to the blitz. I am inclined to think I have won the first round, and that I shall be allowed to play my proper part in local government. I do not for a moment admit that work in such a great body as the L.C.C. is in any way inferior to membership of the House of Commons. But if it is to be worth while, every member must have freedom of judgment. The pretensions of the party caucus must be clamped down. I do think I have already introduced a blast of fresh air into the rather foetid atmosphere of County Hall. Time will show!

Thanks to the courtesy of the official opposition who could,

ill spare a place, I am on the Education Committee and my colleague is on the Housing Committee. The Labour Party, which has an immense majority, could well have surrendered seats to us without in any way weakening their position. The Tories have many faults, but they have at least good manners. And, I may add, they have accepted the independence of our position and asked no conditions, in fact acted without consulting me in any way. Actually, as often as not, we vote in opposite lobbies to the official opposition. We judge each amendment on its merits and vote according to our opinions. A curious sidelight on the growth of the party machine is that before every important committee Labour meet in a private room and decide their attitude to every item on the agenda. Under such a procedure the meeting of the committee becomes more or less a farce, because the official majority has already made up their minds beforehand.

Party feeling ran high in the Council in the old days, but on committees it more or less disappeared, and there was often cross-voting. And rightly so. Local government works through the machinery of committees and all members should equally share responsibility. But if decisions are arrived at outside the committee, you have caucus government and the committee system does not function.

I dwell at length on this subject because I see in the over-development of party, a real threat to the fabric of local government. It is by no means confined to the L.C.C.: the same system functions in borough councils, and I am assured in most other parts of the country where Labour dominates.

The only remedy I can see is a change in the method of election to local government authorities. Proportional representation through the system of the single transferable vote would secure not only truer representation of all points of view, but would guarantee that members would be more independent of their party machine and that candidates of character and personality would be more likely to get elected. Now any old broomstick that runs on the party ticket gets the solid party vote.

But I must not be led in this postscript into too long a disquisition on local government, or the end of this book would leave a false impression.

My activities have been by no means confined to the L.C.C.

After the General Election I was elected president of the Liberal Candidates' Association, a virile body that has played a big part in the reorganisation of the party.

Then I have been acting as chairman of a new committee to make contact with Liberals in other countries with a view to establishing an International Liberal Movement. And I attach

great importance to this work. Communists and Socialists are militant everywhere. The more aggressive they become the greater the need for a heaven of Liberalism. In the Scandinavian countries and in the Northern European States there is still a lot of sturdy Liberalism that wants encouragement. There is need for an exchange of views and a definition of principles. While I am writing there are plans for an international conference at Brussels to celebrate the Centenary of Belgian Liberalism, to be followed by a conference at Oslo. All this is for the good.

I am convinced that the world is crying out for the Liberal approach and this committee has useful work to do.

The year 1946 marks the beginning of new activities. I am finding more time for writing and reading than my parliamentary duties permitted, and that is a comfort. I have no ambition to live to a great age. Anyhow, I would rather wear out than rust out.

One thing I have not mentioned anywhere in the previous chapters, and that is my family. It does not seem very relevant to my forty years of political life. But it has been pointed out to me that it is a serious omission, so I hasten to rectify it.

I have two sons—the elder was educated at Shrewsbury and the younger at King's School, Bruton. Both went to Cambridge. I had intended that the elder should go to the Bar, which had been my own earliest ambition, and entered him at my old Inn, the Middle Temple. But with the natural perversity of youth he decided to go into the family business, the very last thing I wanted him to do. If that had been my ambition for him, I have no doubt it would have been different. But as it is he has proved right. He has made his home in New Zealand, built a house there, and is the very capable chairman of the New Zealand company of Bing, Harris & Co. Ltd. He married a charming Australian girl and has two boys and one girl.

Curiously enough, my second son, Nicholas, also married an Australian, Lucille Lisle, the well-known actress who, of recent years, has become a member of the B.B.C. Repertory Company. Nicholas was by way of being an artist, studied at the Slade School and did stage décor. But after a visit to New Zealand, and serving five years in the Navy he, too, gravitated into the family business.

Owing to the acute housing shortage at the moment, he and his wife and small son are living with me at Chiswick, to my infinite pleasure.

Conforming to the best tradition of the Victorian novel, that always provided a happy ending, I cannot close this postscript better than with this picture of domestic felicity.

THE END



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